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THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE
OF THE BIBLE



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TORONTO

THE
MISSIONARY MESSAGE
OF THE BIBLE

Julian Price Love

Author of
"HOW TO READ THE BIBLE"

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1941



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First Printing.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY WIFE
*in grateful acknowledgment
of her
devoted missionary spirit*

Foreword

THIS volume had its inspiration in the present world situation. The changed attitudes toward missions of late demand a rethinking of incentives. Exactly why is the Christian faith missionary? The terror of the world in which we live can find its quickest relief in honest answers to such a question.

But this volume is not written for a passing age alone. It seeks to get at the biblical bases for missions, and these are timeless. To inquire what grounds for world views lie in the Hebrew-Christian writings of our Old and New Testaments is to look for the ultimates of faith.

The present study makes no pretense of being exhaustive. Nevertheless pains have been taken to search out in each section of the Bible those passages and those dominant ideas that lie at the root of a missionary religion. The passages are cited and are commented upon. But the point will often be lost unless the reader has his Bible at hand and looks up and reads first the part of scripture that is being used. If such a plan is followed, it will be possible to use these chapters as a study textbook in the missionary message of the Bible.

In the preparation of this material I have been greatly helped through suggestions made by friends

who have been kind enough to read the manuscript carefully. Especially would I acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. W. O. Carver, Professor of Missions in the Southern Baptist Seminary of Louisville, and author of many wise books on this and related themes, for his timely counsel on biblical materials that simply could not be omitted even from a brief volume, and to Dr. Teunis E. Gouwens, Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Louisville, for his constructive criticism of the structure of the manuscript. Other helpful readers include Mrs. Emmet F. Horine, and my colleague on the Presbyterian Seminary Faculty, Dr. Charles H. Pratt, of the Chair of Missions. To Mrs. N. A. McCawley go my sincere thanks for careful preparation of copy, and to many other friends for encouragement and advice.

JULIAN PRICE LOVE

*Louisville, Kentucky,
July 30, 1941.*

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
PROLOGUE: <i>Stemming the Tide of Retreat</i> . . .	I
THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	
1. <i>The Patriarchs and the God of the Whole Earth</i>	15
2. <i>The Historians and the Religion of the Cult</i>	30
3. <i>The Poets and the Human Heart</i>	37
4. <i>The Major Prophets and the Universal God</i>	54
5. <i>The Minor Prophets and an Outreaching Faith</i>	75
THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT	
6. <i>The Mission of the Life of Christ</i>	95
7. <i>Universal Notes in the Teachings of Christ</i>	114
8. <i>The Missionary Strategy of the Book of Acts</i>	132
9. <i>Manifestoes of a World-Wide Church: The Epistles of Paul</i>	153
10. <i>Struggle and Triumph: Hebrews, the General Epistles, and the Apocalypse</i>	175
EPILOGUE: <i>The Missionary Impress of the Bible as a Whole</i>	195

PROLOGUE

Stemming the Tide of Retreat

FOR the last decade and more the mission enterprise of the church has been under merciless fire. Not that it has ever had the enthusiastic endorsement of the church or has ever been free from sneering criticism from within as well as from without. But the glorious century and a third since the "haystack prayermeeting" has brought the missions of the western churches such evident fruitage in the East that up until recently these churches have been able to reply to all questioners in somewhat the same way that Jesus replied to the disciples of the Baptist, "Go tell John the things which ye have seen and heard."

True it is that many types of criticism have been in vogue for a long time. There was the cry of the professional globe-trotter that he had visited for a week on some American Indian reservation or in some Asiatic port without ever coming in contact with a Christian convert. There was the complaint of the very conservative church treasurer that too much of the benevolence dollar went for overhead in the supposedly sumptuous offices of the denominational head-

quarters. There was the jibe of the would-be expert in personality analysis that those who were taken as missionaries were the left-overs of society, and the cancelling jibe of some who had been asked to fill out questionnaires that mission boards were too particular about candidates they accepted. There was the trite excuse of those who never gave to missions that there were enough heathen at home, and there was the solemn fact that missionary societies were largely feminine in their membership. There was the popular belief that converts did not stick, that missionaries made a nuisance of themselves to the foreign consuls of their governments, and that missions in general were hardly worthy representatives of American proficiency.

But, after all, these criticisms were mostly superficial. Their lack of seriousness even for those who used them was frequently to be seen in the ease with which an alert missionary with a pleasing personality and some pictures or native objects could dispel them and win their users to at least tacit support. Of late, however, there have been rising much deeper and more trenchant criticisms, cutting at the theology behind missions and at the basic purposes of the churches, and resulting in a confusion of the whole idea and program in the minds of leaders as well as followers. Nor do all these criticisms come from enemies of the faith. Such volumes as the "Layman's Report" and the more recent "Living Religions and a World Faith" do not indeed deny the validity of Christian missions, but they seek such a fundamental change in the philosophy and the

method of missionary effort as to suggest a revolution in the traditional thinking of many.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO THE COUNTRIES SERVED

The basic criticisms of missions today plumb two depths. One of them has to do with the relation of the church to a worldly philosophy and the other with the church's inner philosophy of its own religion.

The worldly philosophy is to be seen in the thought of the church as a world power. Are not missions (so the critical of the day are asking) simply the ecclesiastical side of the attempt of one group of the human race to lord it over other groups? Are they not all the more despicable because they mouth pious phrases of helpfulness to hide their real lust for power?

The point of this fundamental challenge turns on the class consciousness of the day. Christian missions are operated by people of economically favored groups and are sent, as a rule, to those that are poorer. They are generally manned by people of intellectual advancement and often thrive among people of low intelligence. They are conducted by the people of western industrialisms which are seeking foothold among eastern cultures. They are managed almost altogether by people of the white race and are sent to the people of the colored races both in America and across the sea. Are they not simply added means of subduing these races and classes and cultures?

As all too ready support for such questioning, certain undeniable facts are now the property of common

knowledge. The trader has often accompanied the missionary and has set an example of greed and slave shackling. The libertine has often followed the missionary and has set an example of filthy morals. The government has often attended the missionary, and has raised its flag over him in protection while it was seeking concessions in raw materials or ports of commerce from the peoples he was evangelizing. The trafficker in goods, outlawed or frowned down upon at home, has often gone with the missionary and has taken advantage of the opening up of new tastes for the furtherance of his abominable sales. Thus the missionary's Bibles and dictionaries have taught the people to read, and have frequently been followed by the importing of atheistic or salacious books. Opium and obscene cinemas and wholesale production of idols have come from the missionary's home country. The operation of factories without the safety devices or the laws of wage and hour or the protection of children that we know, has been made possible by capital that has streamed in from the lands that have sent the missionary. Small wonder that the missionary is often confused with these and may be thought of as their secret service agent.

Those who attack missions as a form of western imperialism may stress any one of many arguments. If missions are not imperialistic, they say, let their control be turned over to the nationals of the various countries. If missions are not imperialistic, let the many mushroom growths which they have planted here and there to insure occupancy be abandoned in favor of

some few efforts that are so well handled as to be obviously humanitarian in purpose. If missions are not imperialistic, let them realize the determined meaning in the rise of the nationalisms of today. Let them know that the East is self-conscious as well as the West. Let them read the handwriting on the wall when they are forbidden to teach the Bible in their schools or are required to let their pupils bow at native shrines. Let them know that lands which have been looked down upon mean business when they limit the influence of the foreigner. Let them understand that this attitude is no passing whim of a war-crazy era but is a new and permanent point of view. Let them know that war itself has now so completely and permanently poisoned the minds of men against one another as to render missions impossible.

The question of how much truth and how much error is in such probing waits for profound thinking and living to answer. In the meantime the existence of such feelings and the rapid dissemination of them has frightened the church and caused many to beat the drums of retreat as the safest and easiest way out.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO THE CHURCH'S TEACHING

But deeper than the world philosophy with which the missions of the church have become entangled in the thinking of many is the religious philosophy of its own historic teaching. This, too, is being held up today as a critique of the whole mission enterprise.

It is being pointed out that the modern missionary

movement is quite young. It originated around the turn into the nineteenth century in a reaction from the rationalism of the eighteenth. It was highly romantic, a sort of new knighthood bursting into flower within the Christian church as a means of letting loose the long pent-up emotions of good hearts. It was impractical and idealistic from the start, an evident addendum to the sum of Christian theology. The ribaldry of Tom Paine, the cold deism of early leaders of the American republic, the general disrepute in which the church was held, led to an opposite in the outburst of evangelistic fervor that has spread over the world before it has had time to cool down and find sanity. Now that we can more calmly view the work of the church since 1800, we needs must feel a bit ashamed of our latest crusade to make a holy land out of all the earth.

In support of such a position there is arising a line of thought which suggests quite frankly that missions have almost always been the work of an enterprising seeking of control or a fanatical sectarianism, and that they have been tabooed by sincere religious leaders. Martin Luther, founder of the Protestant movement, did not believe in missions. He said that if the Lord wished the heathen converted he would arrange for it himself. John Calvin did not believe in missions as part of the church's enterprise. He said that whatever missionary work was to be done was the business of the State. The missions that were planted prior to the Protestant age by the church of the Middle Ages were simply signals of conquest by the Holy Roman Empire, or means of destroying the rival religious bids of

Jews or Moslems. Even the missionary zeal of the church of the New Testament was for the most part the product of the Apostle Paul, who never saw Jesus in the flesh, and who substituted for the ideal of the kingdom of heaven an ecclesiastical order.

THE BIBLE AND MISSIONS

If such reasoning as the above shocks the good Christian, he may at least be awakened by the shock to an examination of his position while yet there is time. It will not do simply to seek a shock-absorber. However much of falsity these statements contain, they push us back to our fundamental principles. Do we really have basic grounds for considering the mission enterprise integral to the Christian faith? Is it actually at the heart of our religion or has it been tacked on?

To answer this question we must go back to the source materials of our faith, and these are to be found in the Bible. Such a pronouncement must not be confused with trite piety. Mere Biblicism is a devilish form of idolatry. Ours is not the religion of a book, but of a Person. But the writings of the Old and New Testaments do contain the whole of the germinal teaching of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. The writings of the scribes, the commentaries of the fathers, the deliverances of councils, all flow from the springs of thought which sparkle forth from the towering mountain tops of religious revelation in the Bible. If these springs of thought are missionary in their tone and import, then and then only do we have a right

to say that missions are the imperative of our faith, whatever may be the attitude of the times.

"Missionary in tone and import." These words are carefully chosen. No mere verbal commands found here and there within the Bible will suffice. The whole tenor of its teaching must be examined. Time was when an isolated saying could be lifted out and made the touchstone of belief. The story is told of a worried young minister who once asked the Duke of Wellington if he thought that the church should engage in missions. The Iron Duke replied sternly, "What are your marching orders, sir?" Such a philosophy grounds the missionary enterprise on an explicit command to which we must render implicit obedience. This is just the sort of over-simplification of the matter that might be expected from one brought up as a soldier. He conceives life in the largely mechanical terms of following an order. His "not to question why."

But the Christian rightly questions why. And it is the genius of our faith to lead to an answer. Jesus ennobled his disciples by telling them he had called them, not servants, but friends; "for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." He assured them, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The friends of God do not depend on particular injunctions alone, even when these are reported as the words of Christ. As has been intimated, such particular sayings can be matched by particular sayings on the other side. Those who oppose missions, as well as those who have championed slavery or those

who still glorify war, can quote "passages" to a fearful church as glibly as a certain one quoted scripture to the Master in his hour of temptation. The kind of examination of the Bible that is needed, will indeed deal with particular books and particular teachings, but it will deal with them in such a way as to discover, not some pointed saying alone, but the fundamental mood and atmosphere in which they are written. It is not whether you can harmonize the universalism of the gospel of Matthew with the same gospel's Judaistic sayings that seem to come right out of the scrap bag of some scribe; but is the universalism or is the scribal saying the determining type in Matthew?

Now when we look into the Bible with such a question in mind, there is much that seems to have little relation to a world-wide viewpoint. There is even some that seems to be antagonistic to it. In the Old Testament there are leaders of a rather narrow nationalism, such as Joshua and Samuel, prophets of nothing but doom on foreign peoples, such as Obadiah and Nahum, priests who glory in Jewish particularism, such as Ezra and the author of Esther. In the New Testament there is Jesus' opposition to the proselyting habits of the Pharisees and his statement about his own mission as being limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There is the cry for vengeance on foes in the Book of Revelation, there is Jude's injunction to have mercy on some people "with fear," and there is even Paul's feeling of the native superiority and advantage of the Jew. Now the question is not whether we can match these viewpoints with a certain quan-

tity on the other side. This would be only to produce a futile feeling of opposites. The question is whether these viewpoints, arising out of particular situations, are occasional or essential. Are they attitudes that are sloughed off for others that become dominant as the history of the church moves on, or are they themselves the dominating motifs? Especially, are the anti-missionary passages of the Old Testament due to the narrow nationalism of certain leaders, or are they in harmony with the spirit of the God who is pictured there?

The modern world needs to be convinced that there is unity in the Bible. It has been so impressed with diversity. Our Bible is thought of today as a library. In it are religious compositions by many men of varied ages and interests. There are prophets like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, wise men like Job and Solomon, and poets like David and Luke. There are calm, devout spirits, such as Isaac, and stormy, fiery ones, such as Elijah. There are unvarying souls such as Paul, and shifting spirits, such as Peter. There are men of pithy, picturesque thought and speech, such as James, and men of deep philosophy, such as John. Can we expect unity among all these? Especially, can we find them one in missionary passion?

This is the crux of the whole matter. We may try to get around it with the use of that overworked phrase, "progressive revelation." It is, of course, true that we have a right to expect broader views as men grow in their knowledge and understanding of God. It is certainly to be emphasized that the New Testa-

ment is really new; it is the Christian's supreme charter of faith. But there is, none the less, a real unity in the Hebrew-Christian tradition that makes the Old and New Testaments one in their basic views of life. This is not a figment of the imagination or a scheme of unity artificially framed by clever scholastics; it is an observable fact that cannot be evaded. Hence, if there is no such unity in fundamental missionary spirit, then the church is doomed sooner or later to give way before the anti-missionary effects of war and greed and national pride. But if we can find among these religious writers, of such diversity of time and thought, a linking thread of faith in a God for all the world, we shall have found a faith which time and tide cannot affect. If the pages of the Bible are filled, not only with injunctions to convert, but with a spirit that is ecumenical, then there is something to the business of missions that no amount of casuistry in present-day life can undermine. We need to ask afresh whether you could have taken away from either Hebrew or Christian an ultimate world-view and have produced the religion of the Old and New Testaments—our religion—at all. In a very real sense we go back to the Bible to get our bearings for today.

THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I

The Patriarchs and the God of the Whole Earth

THE book of Genesis may be read as a picturesque narrative of life in terms of interesting personalities. The author of the book may have meant his narrative to include the movements of tribes and the general religious history of groups of peoples. But so artistically has he done his work that the great individuals of the book not only represent races and sections of country, but they stand out in their own right. To know the towering characters of the book of Genesis—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph—is to know the book itself; and if the reader adds to these the equally clear pictures of the lesser persons that gather around them—Cain, Abel, Japheth, Lot, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, Laban, Rachel, Reuben, Judah—he gets vivid detail of the family point of view of the first book of the Bible. The God of Genesis is the God of *persons*, whose clear-cut traits and varying experiences afford illustration rather than precept of life's reality. To find what God meant to them is to discover the extent to which the religion of Genesis is an ecumenical religion, a faith that has meaning for all kinds of men.

When we turn to the remainder of the Pentateuch we seem to find masses of narrative, liturgical, and even prophetic material which is unrelated to persons. Yet here also, though the books are four in number and the outstanding individuals are few, the giant character of Moses towers above all. The narrative of the journey from Egypt to the borders of Canaan is the story of the ups and downs of Moses' leadership. The developed ceremonial of tabernacle worship is woven around Moses' priestly ministry to his people. The prophetic discourses of Deuteronomy are pictured as the pleadings of Moses to a people he is soon to leave. The religion of the Pentateuch, therefore, centers in a few great souls. To discover its missionary motifs we must measure the breadth of meaning that God had for them.

But in a deeper sense the book of Genesis goes beyond persons to fundamental ideas. It is truly a religious philosophy of beginnings. In the broad scope of its understanding there is clear portrayal of a point of view that includes all the world and all ages of time. The sweeping pictures of creation, however poetical, are unmistakable in their insistence on the universal rulership of one God of perfect ethical quality. The first three chapters of Genesis truly anticipate the whole of our Old and New Testaments in their view of the redemption of humanity as an eternal purpose grounded in the very nature of God.

ADAM AND THE HUMAN PROBLEM

The biblical approach to faith is the reverse of that which is common today. We of the West try to find

God objectively in the universe he has made. We reason logically to this end. The Oriental finds God intuitively within himself. Our notion of questioning and trying to prove whether there is a God is absolutely foreign to any part of Scripture. Arguments for God are nowhere found in its pages. With the exception of the later literature of the Old Testament from the prophets of the seventh century on, even God's perfection of character is taken for granted. How God can create the world, or how he can hear prayer, or how he can govern men—such problems may worry the systematic philosophers, but they cause no ripple of query in the lives of biblical men of faith.

But turn the tables and you have the "problem" approach of the Bible from its very first page. Man is a problem to God! Not this or that man, not a certain race or class, but mankind. In all his ways and all his actions man becomes God's care. God is concerned, not with the universe, with rolling suns and wandering planets, but with human nature. This fact is the Bible's first evangel. "Not unto angels" even, but unto flesh and blood people, the creative and redemptive love of God reveals itself. The fact that the one true God singles out humanity from all the order he has made is the foundation stone of the missionary enterprise.

The Unity of the human race: Gen. 1:1, 26, 27.

The force of this fact would not be so great, the problem that humanity presents to God would not be so urgent, if the Bible failed to make clear the fundamental unity in the race of men. But from its outset it

is clear in its teaching of oneness. "In the beginning God created the heaven and *the earth*," one earth, a unit. Adam is drawn for us, not as the ancestor of Palestinian tribes or of Mesopotamian hordes, but of all mankind. Humanity is constantly referred to as "he," not as "they." Man is made in the image of God; he is God's peculiar likeness, his moral equivalent on earth. Therefore he is not split into some examples that are worthless, some that merit slight attention, and others that are noble. Man as man is after God's likeness.

Redemption as a plan for humanity: Gen. 3:15; 4:1.

If the story ran that mankind always bore unimpaired this image of God, its unity might be less striking than it is. But it is when a quality is strained to the breaking point and still does not break that its true worth is seen. Sin in the picture of the life story of Adam is not represented as destroying God's image in man; instead it is the occasion of the divine activity in mending the break. Man is God's one redeemable creature. Between the whole human race and the tempting power of sin, pictured as the slithering serpent, there is to be continual enmity, and from the human race itself God's redeemer is to come. This is often called the "protevangelium," the first preaching of the gospel. Very pathetic indeed is Eve's cry at the birth of her first son, "I have gotten a man (literally, *the man*) from the Lord." Apparently the author means to say that she thought Cain was the promised savior of humanity. But her disappointment, bitter as it was, is

only a recognition of long postponement of that which cannot be defeated—the purpose of God to reunite the race in himself through one of its own members.

The idea of “brother’s keeper”: Gen. 4:1–12.

The seriousness with which the thought of God as the God of all mankind is taken in the story of Adam becomes most expressive in the account of Cain’s slaying of Abel. Here the murder of one man by another is presented as the all but unforgivable travesty on the meaning of life. In the very nature of humanity as God has made it lies the call for each individual to be his brother’s keeper. When he transgresses this expectation, his brother’s blood cries clear to God. Men are to be as concerned for one another as God is for them; to run away from this law is to give up all meaning to life, it is to be “a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth.” Yet, suggestively enough, the very “mark” put upon Cain, was not, as has been so often represented, for a branding, but for a protection, that God’s ultimate purpose of redemption might be remembered. Cain, though a murderer, was still a member of the human family, and so still an object of God’s mercy.

NOAH AND THE PROMISE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The cycle of stories gathering round the name of Adam is succeeded by another cycle with Noah as the center. Apparently the character and importance of Noah impressed Christian writers more than it did Jewish. Real rightness with God is often the theme of the New Testament, as it is the supreme topic of the

Old Testament. Outside of this group of stories in Genesis there is more attention paid to Noah in the New Testament than in the Old. He is typically the man of righteousness.

Preserving righteousness in the race: Gen. 6:5-9; Heb. 11:7; II Pet. 2:4,5.

The importance of this story is missed if we pin our attention on details of action. How large the ark was made, how many animals entered it, how long the rains fell—all these questions may involve some theory of how the story came to be written in the form in which we have it. But the salient features of the tale are that Noah was a man of righteousness, that he afflicted his soul over the sins of his day, and that he was led of God to demonstrate a kind of righteous faith that would be preservative. These are the essentials seized upon by the New Testament writers of Hebrews and II Peter. If faith like this can save even in the midst of wickedness that covers the earth, then there is a message of God worth giving to men wherever they may be.

The seal of promise: Gen. 9:8-17.

The beautiful and familiar rainbow story with which the episode of Noah is followed, as by "clear shining after rain," has its own missionary significance. Not all the wonders of God can be disclosed to men of any one age or place. The righteousness of Noah was decidedly relative. How vulgar the picture of his festive orgy after his release from the ark! How dis-

appointing the words, "And Noah was drunk"! There is much understanding of God held in reserve even when men have suffered. But God's bow is in his sky; his promise is forever sure. His severest judgments are not intended to be blackouts of humanity. He still loves and cares. The rainbow suggests not merely the negative, that God will not destroy man's earth, but also the positive, that the righteousness which shines out however slightly shall ultimately be in all human hearts as it was in Noah's. It shall be God's righteousness entering into men and keeping them in his preserving power.

ABRAHAM AND A WORLD BLESSING

From the standpoint of the author of Genesis, the twelfth chapter is the watershed of the book. Abraham is the most important of all the patriarchs. It is especially significant, then, that there is much in his story that is marked as of common human interest, and much in God's guidance of his life that is deliberately intended to be a blessing to the whole human race. His story is the epitome of biblical religion.

A man as a blessing: Gen. 12:1-3.

The call of Abram from the land of the East is set down as the free choice of God, made in order that he might have one in whom he could carry out his will of goodness to the earth: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The importance of this saying to the ancestor of the Hebrew people can hardly be overemphasized, for later Judaism forgot the purpose

in the call of Abram in its anxiety to preserve the purity of his descendants. The choice of one race among many was not an anti-missionary act on God's part, selecting one and letting others go by; it was rather among the most missionary of his acts, choosing one and filling it with a sense of his will and a deep understanding of his nature so that it might teach all mankind that nature and that will. God's elections are always for the channeling of blessings. The favored group that forgets this will soon lose the favor. The very name of the founder of the Hebrew people was changed from Abram, "exalted father," to Abraham, "father of a multitude," in recognition of the world-wide character of the blessing bestowed upon him (Gen. 17:5). The avowal of a blessing upon all mankind through Abraham is renewed in the story of the impending destruction of Sodom (18:16-18) and as the sequel to the offering up of Isaac (22:15-18). Later it is given to Isaac himself (26:1-5) and to Jacob (28:10-14).

The preserving providence of God: Gen. 13:14-18.

The noble tale of Abram's generosity to Lot is incidental testimony to the providence of God which turns every choice of man to the furtherance of his good purpose for humanity. After the greedy nephew had chosen the best land and had gone to occupy it, God appeared to Abraham and told him he was to have still more territory and a sure inheritance. The channel of God's blessing was to be blessed no matter what he had to give up.

The world nature of Abraham's faith: Gen. 15:1-6;
Rom. 4.

The means through which Abraham became a blessing to posterity was his faith. Without this he never could have been the father of the multitude nor of the line of Hebrew prophets and seers nor of the Messiah. Without this he would not have become significant to Christian thought above all other patriarchs. For Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Noah had a chance to believe and act; Abraham had to believe and wait. There was no ark that Abraham could build to show his faith, nothing he could do to get the promise but trust. God showed him the stars and compared the multitude of his descendants to them when as yet Abraham had no son, and when it was impossible for Abraham to have a son according to nature. It took a miracle to justify Abraham's faith, as it always takes a miracle to justify faith. And for that very reason the faith of Abraham has become the symbol of faith for all time. As such, Paul uses it in his great argument in Romans to show that all men must be saved by faith. We know a good deal more about God today than Abraham knew. We have a far richer treasury of experience with him. But we still come to God by the same quality of faith by which Abraham came, for faith is not knowledge and experience, it is trust; the kind of trust that can see all knowledge fade and all experience be contradicted, and yet believe. This faith transforms life—it saves. And because it was first the faith of Abraham, he has

become the father of all the faithful who, in the midst of life's uncertainties, look "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Abraham's faith has become world-wide. Its missionary motif is his memorial.

JACOB AND THE REMAKING OF LIFE

We may pass over the story of Isaac among the patriarchs. It is interwoven with that of his father Abraham: he "dugged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father" (Gen. 26:18). He was a quiet soul who "went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen. 24:63). There may even be a hint that, although he was the child of promise, he had no such vital faith as his father had had. The Lord is spoken of as "the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42), and Jacob is said to have sworn "by the Fear of his father Isaac" (Gen. 31:53). The word used for "Fear" in both these cases means "dread."

The God of the Fathers can be a man's own: Gen. 28:10-19.

Perhaps it was the fearful nature of Isaac's faith, together with his jealous quarrels with Rebekah over their sons, that sent Jacob from home with nothing but a traditional religion. Be that as it may, it took the experience of Bethel to bring Jacob to the realization that God was his very own. Before this he had always thought of the Lord as the God of Abraham and Isaac; now he finds him in the very place where he

himself is and sees a ladder reaching from his own wayfarer's pillow to the Almighty's throne. That the God of the past can become the younger man's "contemporary" is truly a message of missionary import.

The transformation of character: Gen. 32:13-32.

But the Bethel experience, while it gave Jacob a first-hand religion, failed to change him much. He still bargained with God as he had bargained with his brother Esau. He went on to the old home country to outwit his uncle Laban in questionable dealing. It took a new fear and a new wandering to bring him to the place where he could manfully put his family on the safe side of the brook while he wrestled all night with a man of God. However physical that wrestling may have been, its deep reality lay within his own conscience. There it was that he realized for the first time that he was wrong and gave himself up to God. No wonder his name was changed from Jacob to Israel, from "deceiver" to "prince with God." This is the first story in the Bible of the "conversion" of a man. It is the first missionary message of God's redemptive power actually working in the life of a man who had been successful in a worldly sense, but was spiritually impoverished.

JOSEPH AND GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

The story of Joseph is the most interesting of all the cycles of the patriarchs in the book of Genesis. The forgiving love of God shines brightly in the heart of

this man who was a brother, even though his boyish dreaming had led him to a provoking pride.

The union with an alien race: Gen. 41:39-45.

It must have taken a great deal of grace on the part of the Jews to admit that their hero of the famine emergency was married to an Egyptian, and that his sons were thus of mixed blood. It is a source of satisfaction to the lover of men of all races to note how the destinies of Hebrew and Egyptian were interwoven by the humanitarian labors of Joseph.

The overruling providence of God: Gen. 45:1-8.

If God's providence to Abraham meant his continual care, God's providence to Joseph meant his constant overruling in the affairs of men to bring about through this one man his great good purpose. It is a very profound truth that Joseph utters to his brothers, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." The whole story of Joseph is written from the standpoint of one who believes that everything men do, good or bad, will be turned to help bring to pass the will of God. It is not simply that God will eventually bring that will to pass, though the evil of men may hinder it. That is true, but it is not the great truth of the Joseph story. It is that the Psalmist was right when he said of God, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee" (Psa. 76:10). It is that the very wickedness of Joseph's brothers in their youth, the very dreams of Joseph himself, the timely passing of a caravan going down to Egypt, even the mercenary motives of his

brothers that prompted them to sell him rather than kill him, the evil designs of Potiphar's wife, the dreaming of Pharaoh and his officers, the coming of the famine itself—all these played their part in fulfilling the purposes of God; they all contributed to making Joseph what he became, the preparer of the way, the uniter of races, the redeemer of starving multitudes. There is universal significance in the story of Joseph as it shows God using all races and individuals to accomplish, not an arbitrary decree, but a good will.

MOSES THE PROPHET

Moses is generally thought of as a lawgiver, and sometimes as the organizer of separate tribes into something resembling a national group. These functions of this great leader were important, but they are less than his work as a prophetic voice speaking the mind of God to the people. A prophet always deals with his own time out of a thorough knowledge of its conditions, but he speaks truth of a timeless and eternal nature. Nearly all the Hebrew prophets had a message that was good for men as men, regardless of race or clime.

Broad training: Ex. 2.

In the case of Moses there is, even more than with Joseph, a breadth of relationship and training that makes it unfair for any one people to claim him. Cradled in the sagacious love of a Hebrew home, brought up in the palace of an Egyptian princess, apprenticed as a shepherd to a wise man of Midian,

Moses experienced a truly catholic preparation for the master work of his life. Even his stumbling speech that caused him to fear a public appearance could not prevent the addresses of such a man from becoming universally remembered and renowned.

Humanitarian law: The Book of Deuteronomy.

The greatest relic of Moses' appeal to all time is the book of Deuteronomy. This "second law" is a second in more senses than one. It is a wording of the moral and ceremonial laws that are to be found in Exodus and Leviticus so as to make it more evident that they were intended for the blessing and not for the burdening of humanity. Thus the rendering of the decalogue in Deuteronomy 5 is a more appealing form than the more familiar first giving of the commandments in Exodus 20 where awe and fear are uppermost. All through the great book of Deuteronomy there is a keenness of understanding, a detail of care for human life, a consideration and a kindness that approaches the New Testament conception of the law of love.

The first forerunner of the Greater Prophet: Deut. 18:15.

If the average Bible reader were asked to pick out from the prophetic addresses of this book of Deuteronomy the greatest saying, probably many would pick Moses' famous prediction, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (or, as it may be read, "as he raised up me"). Moses may have had in

mind simply the belief that at his death God would provide a new leader. But a prophet generally spoke better than he knew. His deep spiritual insight as a man of God turned him to the future "far as human eye could see," and farther, so that Moses has become for all history the prototype of him whose mission it was to come from the midst of his brethren and lead them out of the slavery land of sin to the promised land of God's eternal presence.

CHAPTER 2

The Historians and the Religion of the Cult

THE books of our English Old Testament, that we commonly call historical, are twelve in number, running from Joshua through Esther. To be sure, the Jewish church did not group them in this fashion. They did not call any books "historical" in the sense that they were written simply to record events. They realized that all the books of the Bible were religious in their aim, interpretative of history rather than merely narrative. They distinguished sharply between two groups of these books, an earlier and a later, because of the main difference of the point of view in their interpretation of history. Thus they called the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings books of "prophets," for they felt justly that the story of Israel's development which they contain lays the stress on great prophetic characters and is itself a prophetic proclamation of God's dealings with his chosen people. The books of the Chronicles, on the other hand, though they have much narrative in common with the books of the Kings, are written more from the standpoint of the priests who dominated the Jews after

their period of exile. The same may be said of Ezra and Nehemiah and of Esther.

Now in both of these groups of "historical" books there is a dearth of direct missionary material and very little of the ecumenical spirit. But the reason is somewhat different in the two cases. In the first group there is unfolded the story of the growth of the Hebrew state. It certainly would not be fair to say that the ultimate purpose of the development of a religious state was entirely lost sight of, but there is little stress on this purpose. There is nothing in these books to deny that Jehovah will some day be God of the whole earth, nor that he is equipping a people to make known his name to all the world. But it is the equipping of that people that is the focusing point of the historians' attention and not any wider aim outside themselves. To be equipped they must be separate, different. The book of Joshua emphasizes the ideal of a conquered land, made free from enemies whose cup of iniquity was full. The book of Judges tells the more realistic story of the failure of a deeply religious people to free themselves from the presence of the ungodly, a failure that led to repeated downfalls of the religious themselves. The books of Samuel and Kings portray the story of the slow, painful growth of these religious tribes into a nation, a growth that required Samuel's devotion, Saul's military genius, and David's shepherd-ing care to bring to maturity, a growth that was hindered and finally stunted by tribal jealousies, selfish leaders, and sectional division. In all this story, inner development rather than wider significance is stressed.

In the second group of books there is a delight in picturing the peculiar customs of the Jews that have grown up to help them preserve a unity in days of scattering. The ominous tones of the exile sound throughout the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. It is small wonder that national customs and racial tags become dear to the writers. The preserving of God's people even in earlier days is accredited by Chronicles to great priests like Jehoiada, who receives far more attention than in the more prophetic account in Kings. Even the greatest of the kings, according to Chronicles, are men like Hezekiah and Josiah, who were noted chiefly for their purifying of worship and their centering it in Jerusalem. Ezra is held up as a great reform priest who will not tolerate mixed marriages with other races, such as we saw pass without question in the lives of men like Joseph and Moses. Nehemiah also stands for purity of racial custom, and the book of Esther is written to explain the origin of the Jewish feast of Purim.

Now, in such a body of literature as these two groups of "historical" books, we obviously cannot expect to find much sounding of the larger notes. Whatever wider strains break through are so much clear gain in the development of a world-wide evangel. Yet even the general tone of several of these books overreaches the limits of a segregated people. Surrounding nations are frequently represented as being impressed, not alone with Israel's growth and greatness, but with her God. Thus Rahab of Jericho is reported to have aided Joshua's spies because "the Lord your God, he

is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11). Joshua is pictured setting up the memorial stones at the crossing of the Jordan "that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty" (Joshua 4:24). Though fear of Israel's armies was behind much of the favorable attitude taken by other peoples, the religious connection dominates even their fear, as is seen when the wily Gibeonites tell Israel, "From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God" (Joshua 9:9). An understanding of Israel's religious purpose is said to be behind the coöperative spirit of Hiram, king of Tyre, when he aided Solomon in the building of the temple. An interesting combination of the spreading might of Israel and the fame of their God is seen in the recording of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, "When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came—" (I Kings 10:1). A priest of Samaria is said to have once evangelized the Assyrians and "taught them how they should fear the Lord" (II Kings 17:28). Even the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther presuppose that the religious ways of the Jews were known through their faithfulness to their God during their exile and that peoples of many lands had come to respect not only their customs but their faith.

POSITIVE MISSIONARY MESSAGES OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

But we are not limited to these general observations about the tone of the historical books of our Old

Testament. There are several direct exceptions to the non-missionary nature of their contents.

The book of Ruth

Attached to the book of Judges in our English Bible, because its scene is laid in the days of the Judges, is the little book of Ruth. The author of this exquisite idyl goes out of his way to emphasize the eagerness with which noble Hebrew families sought the affection of a maid of Moab. Not only are the sons of Naomi forced to find wives in the foreign land to which famine has driven them, but the faithful Ruth returns to the Hebrews' country with her mother-in-law out of a love that has its wellspring in religious satisfaction which has overleaped a national boundary: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). The proud and wealthy Boaz is pictured as not only willing but eager to fulfill the duty of the next of kin and marry Ruth, and the author apparently delights in ending his tale with a chronicle of generations in which the Moabitess is the heroine of King David's ancestry (Ruth 4:18-22). The book of Ruth is by many believed to have been written late and intended as a direct answer to Judaism's narrowness. If so, the purpose is all the better achieved by this telling association of the story with Israel's early history.

The inclusion of the stranger in Israel's temple. I Kings 8:41-43; II Chron. 6:32,33.

Though the record is doubtless much later than the event, the very fact that both Kings and Chronicles include the stranger of all lands in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of Israel's temple indicates something of the idea of breadth in the religion they were glorifying. The language of both records is full of consideration for the foreigner, and includes the prayer "that all people of the earth may know thy name" and the conviction that they will come "out of a far country for thy name's sake." Perhaps this burst of missionary zeal stems from the conception of the spirituality of God attributed here to Solomon, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"

Prophetic ministry to non-Israelites. I Kings 17:8-24; II Kings 5:2,3; cf. Luke 4:25-27.

Highly significant, too, are the stories of some of the great prophets of Israel's early history who went out of their way to minister to those who were not Israelites either by birth or by conviction. When King Ahab and the entire nation of Israel turned against the plain-spoken Elijah, a widow of Zarephath took him in and received the blessing of the prophet's rarely bestowed favors. The widow's scanty meal was constantly multiplied and her son was cured of a deathly

sickness by the extraordinary efforts of Elijah. The Hebrew prophet worked strenuously for this foreign family. Again, when the little girl of Israel who had been captured by Syria's war lord told her leprous master of Israel's Elisha, the prophet was more than gracious in revealing the secret of a cure to this hated and scoffing foreign tyrant. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus is said to have referred to both these instances to prove the unlimited goodness of God, a cause that seemed to need demonstration in the Nazareth synagogue. So the very turning of Jesus himself to the needy of all races was justified as a mission from the history of the days of Israel's aloofness!

CHAPTER 3

The Poets and the Human Heart

POETS are more human than historians; they deal with the universals of the heart. Poets are not limited by ideas that are peculiar to the cult or the race. The secret musings of the mind plumb deeper than time and circumstance; the cry of the anguished heart for God is everywhere the same; the joys of the spirit are independent of geography or the pigmentation of the skin. The only poet who is limited is the one who writes consciously for an occasion, some laureate whose verses are beaten out according to an order from public pride.

The Hebrew poets were no exception. There are among them, indeed, the nationals who tune rather formal lays and dedicate them to some "chief musician" of the state. But most of them are ecumenical in their interests and glorious in the sweep of their passion. Their religion is genuine and their humanity real.

JOB: THE POSING OF THE HUMAN QUESTION

Of the five works that comprise what we call the poetical books in our English Old Testament, Job

through the Song of Solomon, the first one claims its position almost as an unknown. Who was Job? An historical character, a legendary figure, or a symbol of the human race? No one knows. Where was Uz, the place of his abode? No one knows. Who wrote the book that bears his name? Possibly Moses; Jeremiah has been suggested; but again, no one knows. Surely Job is no Hebrew, yet his nationality is obscure. All of this is but to make clear the one thing we really can know about Job, that he belongs to the ages. His problem is humanity's problem, his woe, humanity's woe. His heart hunger for God, his long search for him, is our own quest. His failure to find God by his own searching, his lack of a complete satisfaction resulting from his carefully guarded goodness, these are the bitter dregs of futility that have been drunk again and again the world around. His grand effort, and that of his friends, to reason out God is but the faithful picture of the noblest in mankind that yet is not noble enough for God. His pride is our pride; his humbling, our humbling. And at last he discovers, as we all must if we are to be ransomed from ourselves, that God finds us instead of our finding him, that he is not far from every one of us. In all of this Job speaks a common language.

For, as the prelude of the first three chapters and the postlude of the last eleven verses make clear, the book of Job is several problems rolled into one. Here is the sublime moralist, assured in his self-possession, not following the ceremonial rule of some cult, but

the universal law of right and wrong written on the human conscience. Here is the great reasoner up against a sense of injustice that has cut too deep to be reasoned out. Job suffers excruciatingly in body and mind, yet never so severely as in his inability to discover why he is suffering. He knows he has not done wrong. All the logic of his friends is to no avail in persuading him otherwise. He knows the old law is a true generality, that goodness produces health and prosperity and that wickedness produces pain and loss. He can see nothing but the failure of inexorable moral law to work. How completely human!

But even more human is the fact that Job does not know what his real difficulty is. "Why do the righteous suffer?" is not the problem of the story of Job, though Job himself in company with hosts of his interpreters thinks it is. Satan poses the real question of the book as he goes from the presence of the Almighty to be man's adversary: "Will a man serve God for nought?" Is there such a thing as disinterested goodness, character that does not go to pieces when the sustaining powers of life all fail? The answer to this query cannot be categorical; it must be wrought out in the furnace of trial; the terms of its equation must be factored from life itself. Job thinks he is clinging to God in spite of everything: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." What his pride fails to realize is that it is God who is clinging to him. When he discovers this, he humbles himself and repents in dust and ashes, repents of his boastful spirit. Here indeed is

the appeal to a world-wide condition. It is always the cry of the poet soul,

“O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?”

The book of Job is ecumenical in its interest, a universal of God's grace, not to the stubbornness of sin, but to the equal stubbornness of self-righteousness.

THE PSALM BOOK AND THE RANGE OF HUMAN FEELING

In like manner the universal appeal of the Psalm book is that of a harmony of human emotions. The book of Psalms cannot be said to be missionary in the sense that it seeks to make converts to a particular conception of God. But it is missionary in the broader sense of a book that attracts to its kind of religious faith the best men everywhere by blending many of the finer feelings of the heart in anthems of praise to the self-revealing God.

We say *many* of the finer feelings, for there are some emotions expressed in the Psalm book that do not strike universal chords. There are some that are narrowly Jewish, some that are of merely casual interest. Historical Psalms, such as the 78th or 105th can, at best, awaken a general response only by their faithful pictures of the ups and downs of the Hebrew race and by their pious identification of varied experiences with the rise and fall of religion. War Psalms, such as the 21st or 144th, reveal a sturdy but quite limited patriotism. Psalms of imprecation on foes are numerous, sinking to the bitter depths of the 137th, most of

them lacking a timeless message. There are much-loved Psalms, such as the 84th and the 122nd, which nevertheless seek to glorify Zion; their popularity arises only from a spiritualizing of their message into some beloved Zion of the reader. There are Psalms that magnify the Hebrew law, notably the very formal 119th. There are festal anthems of Jewry, such as the 118th, and liturgies of some responsible leader of worship whose personal problem comes to the fore, as in Psalm 26. Such Psalms often awaken response beyond their own immediate message, but they are usually not among the most appealing. Even most of the Psalms that are classed as Messianic are not to be counted with the greatest of this book. Many of them, such as the 2nd and 72nd, picture a nationalistic Messiah, military in his operations, and sometimes a rather over-awing ruler.

The best of the Psalms, from the standpoint of their usefulness in forming a world-wide religion, are those which spring as lyrics from some individual heart. Some outstanding examples are in order.¹

Psalms of adoration

No firmer basis for the unification of mankind can be found than the adoration of God. The fact that so many Psalms stress this note will make the Psalm book live forever. The declaration of Psalm 24 that "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" finds ready response, and the Psalm so artfully conceals its local

¹ For a fuller discussion and classification of these, see the author's "How to Read the Bible," pp. 41-52, 92-94.

occasion as to make its message universal. The worship of the God of storm and of quiet in nature in such Psalms as the 29th, 93rd, and 104th gives keen delight wherever men love the out-of-doors. The glorious majesty of God as dwelt upon in such Psalms as the 50th, 68th, and 76th impresses all hearts that have not sinned away their sense of holy awe. "Old Hundredth" is loved wherever man is found. Such beautiful renderings of the greatness of God as the 111th and the 113th Psalms, and such a telling comparison of the spiritual Deity with all other gods as the 115th Psalm, cannot but uplift any human soul. The paeans of praise in the Hallelujah Psalms, especially the last six of the book, are among humanity's treasures of religious exultation.

Psalms of meditation

In quieter mood many other Psalms turn the spirit into higher realms. The opening poem of the Psalm book is reflection of a proverbial type, but true to the innermost needs of the soul. The 8th Psalm's meditation on the wonder of man, the 32nd's pondering on the joys of forgiveness, and the 37th's tender ministry to the fretful heart, touch depths where all men are kin. Meditation on the course of life and its need of religious interpretation is outstanding in such Psalms as the 49th and 73rd. But especially in those lyrics where the reflective spirit turns toward a contemplation of the nature of God himself do these Psalms unite all men in a common brotherhood. There are the 34th, with its "Taste and see that the Lord is good," the

36th, with its devotion to God's mercy, the twin 14th and 53rd, with their assurance that only the fool can fail to see God, and such of the Psalms of Ascent as the 127th and 128th, with their peaceful thought of God in relation to the family.

Psalms of trust

But reflection in any detached philosophic sense is not common in Hebrew thought. Meditation has ever the personal note in it, especially that of the confidence of the individual soul in God. Here the Psalms become most nearly evangelistic in their compelling faith. Poems of the troubles of day and night that are resolved by trust in the Lord are the ever memorable 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Such a Psalm of hope in the possibilities of the future life as the 16th, while rare in its thought among the Psalms, has long been cherished. The 42nd and 43rd form three stanzas of one beautiful hymn of an exile's trust in God, a hymn that enables even the most tried spirit to rise with the query, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?—hope thou in God." All men must at times feel the pull of Luther's delight in the 46th Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Cast thy burden on the Lord" is the beloved injunction of Psalm 55, while the next two confidently declare, "In God have I put my trust," and "My heart is fixed, O God." The 62nd affirms the will to wait for God, the 63rd the constant thirst for God. The 71st is an old man's expression of trust. The 91st is the utterance of a soul confident of God's keeping power from all evil, and the 94th of a

soul who delights in the thought that God knows all. Perhaps loveliest of all the Psalms of trust is the 121st, sung to the mountain heights the world around, and it is followed closely by the 130th, which sounds the note of trust from depths as deep as the heights of the 121st are high. But of course no mention of the appealing power of Psalms of faith in God would rise more than half their flight unless we noted that the 23rd Psalm, with its sweet assurance, "The Lord is my shepherd," is the best-known piece of poetry in all the world, and perhaps the surest single foundation of a world-wide faith.

Psalms of complaint

Not so pleasant as trust is its seeming opposite, complaint. Yet, in all fairness, it must be said that the Psalmists evidence their understanding of the ecumenical heart as much by their voicings of distrust as they do by their hymning of joy and faith. The complaint may be very personal and may be turned into joy, as in the case of the 13th Psalm, or it may take a more social turn, as with the 22nd, or it may find no surcease for its pain, as in the 88th. It may be filled with bitter recollections, as is the case with the 35th and 69th, and may even sound forlorn, as in the 74th and 120th. The complaint may take cognizance of God's past mercies, as does the 77th, or it may reveal the Psalmist's consciousness of his own sin that plays a part in his condition, as the 79th and many others suggest. The wailings of those who have been driven from home or native land, in such Psalms as the 123rd, 129th, 137th,

and 142nd, will find nearly universal sympathy today, and perhaps there has seldom been a time when some part of the earth did not echo their complaint.

Psalms of earnest petition

The wailing cry and the pleading petition are never far apart. They are mingled in many of the Psalms and in some of them the asking voice dominates with requests that come from all mankind. There is the little 6th Psalm with its impassioned cry for God's return, the 12th with its typical cry for help, the 17th with its more rational call for justice, the 38th with its fear that the Psalmist's end has come if God should forsake, the 39th with its soft treading on the shores of eternity, and the 41st which joins the 39th in a plea for restoration from sickness. There is the fine 80th Psalm, with its repeated, "Turn us again, O Lord," and the 141st which humbly beseeches God to "set a watch" before the Psalmist's mouth. And there is the pleading 143rd, which is not content until its petition scales the heights, "Teach me to do thy will."

Psalms of penitence

It is common enough for men to cry to their deity in their extremity. But the godliest souls turn their prayers oftenest into cries for forgiveness of sin. It is not to be wondered at that the Psalm book of our Bible is filled with petitions of this special sort. They are scattered through many of the Psalms to which reference has been made, but some there are which are little else but cries of broken hearts that have been smitten

down by the consciousness of their own sin. Of course the 51st comes readiest to mind, one of the noblest outpourings of self in all literature, without any false reserve, willing to lie naked before God. Among those noted above, the penitential note is strongest in the 25th, 32nd, 38th, and 130th.

Psalms of personal thanksgiving

Numerous among the Psalms of enduring fame are those which express the personal gratitude of the soul that has already received its favor from the Lord and is duly thankful. Joyous expressions of this emotion seem to be rare in life about us, but in the Psalm book they are ever recurring. There are many such Psalms of ordinary reach and passion, such as the 18th with its gratitude to God for his deliverance, the 30th which breathes the peace of mind of one brought back from the brink of the grave, the 52nd with its joy in the Lord's making the Psalmist "like a green olive tree," the 92nd with its didactic proclamation that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," the 116th which grounds thanksgiving in answer to prayer, the 118th with its cup brimming with the goodness of God, and the 138th whose poet just must sing. But there are also some unusual, indeed remarkable, Psalms of thanksgiving. The 27th with its opening outburst, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" dares to ground its gratitude in the thought that God will take up the Psalmist even if his parents let him down. The ever-memorable 103rd, "Bless the Lord, O my soul" is

a veritable catalogue of benefits. And especially the 107th, with its double refrain, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good" and "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness," goes over and over the grounds for gratitude. In broader scope such Psalms as the 85th, 126th, and 128th, pass beyond the individual in their beckoning of the entire nation to the giving of thanks. The 126th goes so far as to note that even "the heathen" recognize, "The Lord hath done great things for them."

The most missionary of the Psalms

While the appeal to universal emotions is the Psalm book's chief claim to ecumenicity, there are certain Psalms that definitely teach a world-wide view. There are those that sing the praises of God as the creator and sustainer of the whole earth, the 89th and 104th being the most notable examples. The 89th asks, "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?" It declares, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine. . . . The north and the south thou hast created them." The 104th revels in the power and providence of the God who is "very great" . . . "who laid the foundations of the earth," who "looketh on the earth, and it trembleth," but who also "renewest the face of the earth."

Then there are those Psalms which approach the prophets in their insistence on the righteousness of God. The 40th is especially memorable for its making the ethical its note of universality:

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire.

* * *

I delight to do thy will, O my God:

Yea, thy law is within my heart.

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.

* * *

I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.

But most important of all from the missionary standpoint are those Psalms which directly relate the God of the Hebrews to all the peoples of the earth. The 22nd declares:

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord:

And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

For the kingdom is the Lord's:

And he is the governor among the nations.

The great organ tones of the 67th are reminiscent of the purpose of the blessing of Abraham:

God be merciful unto us, and bless us;

And cause his face to shine upon us;

That thy way may be known upon earth,

Thy saving health among all nations.

As an entire Psalm this is perhaps the most missionary of them all. Its few lines are filled with notes of universalism: "Let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy. . . . Then shall the earth

yield her increase." The shortest Psalm in the book, the 117th, is completely missionary:

O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
Praise him all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
And the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

The 96th seeks to make the unique character of God known in all the world:

O sing unto the Lord a new song:
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

* * *

Declare his glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people.
For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised:
He is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are idols:
But the Lord made the heavens.

And the 98th envisions a universal witnessing of God's saving power:

The Lord hath made known his salvation:
His righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight
of the heathen.

* * *

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of
our God.
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth.

* * *

For he cometh to judge the earth:
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity.

PROVERBS: THE APPEAL OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

"Common sense" is proverbially uncommon. Many men go through life with their eyes shut and never really learn the laws of living. But there have always been those who have stored up "wisdom" along the way, not the wisdom of a systematic philosophy, but that of an acute understanding of life. The formulation of such a wisdom into memorable epigrams is a pleasant pastime with some, but it has a more serious purpose for those who would instruct others. If there is any possibility at all of a younger generation learning from the experience of an older, then the proverb plays the important rôle of reducing that experience to capsule form that it may be taken regularly for all the spiritual vitamins it contains. To sneer at such writing as merely "practical" is of course to beg the whole question of the relation of morals to life.

It is true that many proverbs do embody a sort of prudential wisdom. They belong to the same type of thinking that Job's friends knew so well, the thinking that asks how much goodness and of what kind gets men on in life. In general they magnify temperance and chastity and frugality because these virtues, like good bed-hours, "make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." They do not teach a virtue for its own sake. They are the source material for the "Poor Richard's Almanac" sort of thinking. Indeed, the Benjamin Franklin type of smartness is a lineal descendant of the "wisdom of Solomon." Nevertheless, in all this there is an answer to a felt need of men everywhere. And many

of the proverbs go beyond the prudential viewpoint. One has only to cast his eye up or down the central portion of the Book of Proverbs (10:1-22:16) to realize how widespread is the fittingness of the best of its sayings.

As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more:
But the righteous is an everlasting foundation.
(10:25)

Where no counsel is, the people fall:
But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.
(11:14)

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:
But the tongue of the wise is health. (12:18)

The heart knoweth his own bitterness;
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.
(14:10)

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. (15:17)

The hoary head is a crown of glory,
If it be found in the way of righteousness. (16:31)

A friend loveth at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity. (17:17)

There are many devices in a man's heart;
Nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall
stand. (19:21)

Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin? (20:9)

To do justice and judgment
Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. (21:3)

The rich and poor meet together:
The Lord is the maker of them all. (22:2)

Perhaps the best idea of the combination of the prudential with the more idealistic is gained if one reads carefully the clusters of proverbs on certain themes of instruction which comprise the first nine chapters of the book. Here the concern of fathers for the well-being of their sons blends with the deeper instincts of a timeless religious faith.

ECCLESIASTES AND THE CURE FOR DISAPPOINTMENT

Another note of world-wide concern is struck by the proverb type of philosophy expressed in the book of Ecclesiastes. To many this is a mournful production and one grounded in pessimism. The writer does repeatedly declare that all is vanity, that his experimentations with riches, pleasure, wisdom, labor, and other would-be satisfactions of the human soul have all ended in disappointment. In this he is by no means alone. What people often fail to realize, however, is that he purposely draws out his tale of these unrewarding quests in order that he may make more vivid the contrast of his simple conclusion,

Fear God, and keep his commandments:
For this is the whole duty of man. (12:13)

This is more than all the rest, this will satisfy the human heart wherever it pulses with life.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON: A LOVE IDYL

Many people have wondered why the Song of Solomon is in the canon of Scripture. It appeals so strongly to the physical senses that would-be purists have been shocked and have sought to evade the issue by spiritualizing the song into a picture of the love of God for his church or even of Christ for the New Testament church. But to the devout Hebrew, who called this "The Song of Songs," that is, the best of songs, there was nothing amiss in including in his book of religion a glorification of human love, of the true passion of a youth for a maid whom he would win against all odds. Such a motif has of course been the theme song of the poets of all ages. The religious poet sings it too.

So it is that the poetical books of the Old Testament reach the human heart. They are not missionary in the sense of attempting to convert men of other beliefs to a new set of ideas. They are ecumenical, though, in the very real sense of bringing under the sway of powerful religious motivation the elemental feelings of all men.

CHAPTER 4

The Major Prophets and the Universal God

THE prophet was the masterpiece of God's handiwork in Israel. He had not been provided for in the regular course of the people's organization as had the military leader, the king, and especially the priest. But as often happens, the unregulated became the greatest. The very fact that the prophet was more of a free lance than any other of the leaders of the people gave him the opportunity for insight into the nature of God and of his will that the more conventional did not attain. Of course it gave him opportunity also for wild and sporadic growth. It is natural that we hear much of false prophets and little of false priests. But when the prophet was truly a "man of God" he rose to noble heights of spiritual understanding and great breadths of human application while the priest was treading the even ground of the forms of religion.

The prophet became the spokesman for God to the immediate situation, the proclaimer of religion not as traditionally fixed but as contemporaneously vital. He knew his age as he knew his God. He spoke plainly and directly to the specific sins and hopes of his age, and

because he spoke as a man of faith he saw principles of life that are eternal, he understood what would happen if conditions were thus and so. And because he knew God better than any other knew him he saw the future, not indeed as a series of predetermined events, but as the Lord of all the earth would be bound to mould it. This centering of truth in one universal God is the keynote that persists through the prophets' varied scales. It is dominant in the longer books of prophecy, and becomes a veritable obsession in the book of Isaiah that stands at the head of the list. To anyone who desires to discover as many as possible of the missionary motifs of the Bible, the volume that we know as Isaiah offers the richest treasury of the Old Testament.

ISAIAH AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD

In a very real sense Isaiah's prophecies make a book. They are a collection into one volume of oracles on many subjects given at many different times and under many different circumstances. Many students believe that they are from the pen of different prophets who felt and taught alike in different eras and thus belonged to the one "school" of Isaiah's thought. It is recognized by all that the volume falls into two parts at the fortieth chapter. But there is a unity about the entire book that no reader ought to miss; it is all fittingly called Isaiah. This unity is in no respect more evident than in the stress laid in all parts of the book on God as the "Holy One" and the righteous Lord. The missionary passion of Isaiah stems from his vision of such a God as the one

God powerful enough to rule all men and the one needed by all as savior.

The prophet called by the God of all the earth. 6:1-8.

The awe-inspiring vision of God which the young prophet saw in the temple surpasses all other stories of God's call of a man. The changes have often been rung on the disappointment of "the year that King Uzziah died," the rich and glorious monarch whose blasphemous rushing into the presence of God left him a leper. The prophet's deep humility before the awful majesty of God's holiness, his new consciousness of sin, his cleansing, and his readiness to answer the call, "Whom shall I send?" have become the well-known roadsigns leading from the futility of man's unholy zeal to the holiness of God. But it is worth noting that in the year when Judah's monarch failed in sustaining the glory of his nation, it was not merely the God of one nation whom Isaiah saw high and lifted up; "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: *the whole earth* is full of his glory."

The greatness of the Savior-God. Ch. 40, esp. vv. 12-31.

No poet ever exulted more grandly in God's saviorhood than he who wrote the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. God alone can comfort those who have suffered for their sins. God can prepare in the heart of the wilderness the way home for the exiles. It is God's word which stands when all flesh fades as the flower of the field. God brought all nature into being without con-

sulting anyone or needing any help. "All nations before him are as nothing," the inhabitants of the earth are "as grasshoppers" before him. No human likeness can be found for God, for when all that is human falls and faints, he it is who gives power to the faint and renewal of strength to those who have no might. Truly this is a declaration of the spirituality of God fit only for the world-wide Deity!

Absolute monotheism. 44:6-17.

In the heights of inspiration which the forty-fourth chapter reaches, the prophet declares that God is eternally superior to every deity of every race and time. He can tell the future before it comes to pass, and they cannot. He is the only God who does not leave his worshippers ashamed. In a very revelry of irony Isaiah pictures the gods of the earth as manufactured creatures, brought into place by the toilsome labor of many artisans. The gods of the nations are the left-overs of man's imagination: "the residue thereof he maketh a god." Many leaders of Israel had doubtless believed before this in one God for all the earth, but the people seem often to have been content to think of Jehovah as Israel's god and the gods of other nations as perhaps just as real for them. But there can be no mistaking the universalism of Isaiah's religion. His is a definite doctrine of monotheism; the God whom Israel has known is the only God known anywhere: "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Later, at the very last of the book

(66:1), the prophet represents his God as claiming the whole world: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." This absolute monotheism becomes also a doctrine of universal saviorhood, "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior" (43:11).

Monotheism grounded in an ethical concept of God.
Ch. 45.

One of the greatest chapters in the book of Isaiah from the missionary standpoint is the forty-fifth. Here the true nature of prophetic religion is made crystal-clear. It is because the prophet believes in a thoroughly righteous God that he can dare to exalt him as the one God of the earth. Universal sway without ethical character would be the most cruel of oppressions. True righteousness alone receives universal honor.

This righteous God sometimes does things which unrighteous man cannot understand. Isaiah cites the call of Cyrus, a heathen ruler, and unfalteringly attributes his rise to the righteous purposes of God who intends to use him for a good end. Twice in this chapter the prophet represents God as saying, "I am the Lord, and there is none else." He declares, "They shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols." But over and over again he reiterates the righteous character of God that lies behind this claim: "I have not spoken in secret. . . . I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." It is because of this righteous character that this great God can redeem the world; it is with deep understanding that the prophet groups his phrases, "A just God and a sav-

our." The great passage of the twenty-third verse boldly declares, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." If we omit the little preposition "in" that has been inserted by the translators, we have Isaiah's explosive declaration as he appears to have meant it, "The word is gone out of my mouth righteousness." The very word of God is righteousness, and therefore he is God of all the earth.

THE CALL TO ABSOLUTE FAITH IN GOD

The doctrine of absolute monotheism cannot be spoken as a glib creed. It demands an equally absolute faith. To say we believe in only one God for all the earth is to say that God is sufficient for all needs everywhere. To turn fearfully to any other source of help is to deny such a belief. This was seen clearly by Isaiah and he never flinched from making known its moral implications. Like his northern contemporary, Hosea, he wasted no false sympathy on the position of the people politically between the two great world powers, Assyria and Egypt. Living in a day when the Assyrians were gaining the upper hand and when they were manifesting themselves as the crueller of the two, he nevertheless rured the tendency of his own people to "go down to Egypt for help" (31:1-6). He reminded his nation that "the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit." Faith in the complete spirituality of God made him daring in a very simple and matter-of-fact way, a way which seemed

an oversimplification to most of his contemporaries as it does to most of the "practical" men of any age. But he was the great Old Testament prophet of faith just because he took his faith seriously at the hardest time.

Historically, Isaiah had at least two opportunities to put to the acid test this doctrine of faith in the God of the whole earth. In both cases he "meddled in politics" because he believed religious faith belonged there. He warned the fearful and vacillating King Ahaz not to make an alliance with northern Israel and Syria in an effort to stave off the Assyrians (chapter 7) just as he warned against going down to Egypt for help. Isaiah was always an isolationist when a military union was brewing. Again, he advised Ahaz' son, the more faithful Hezekiah, to rely solely on God and not on armies when Sennacherib, King of Assyria, came with all his might to besiege Jerusalem. He proclaimed that Jerusalem could not be taken if the king and his people would continue to trust in God and "be not afraid." Hezekiah, against the advice of some of his associates, put the doctrine to the trial, and found his city inviolate (chapters 36 and 37). Later Isaiah sadly records as Hezekiah's one sin his showing the King of Babylon his treasures in order to gain that monarch's favor and assure his own safety. To Isaiah faith in God was not a beautiful ideal, but the one reality, suitable for situations of world-wide concern.

ISAIAH AND THE NATIONS

The claim of the prophets to an ecumenical religion is usually to be tested by their attitudes toward other

nations than Israel. Isaiah is almost as rich in material here as in his teaching of God.

A pagan nation may be God's tool. 10:5-11.

He begins where later prophets do with the thought that God can make use of evil world powers to punish other peoples, even those who are peculiarly his own: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger." Even the hated Assyrian can punish "an hypocritical nation," but the Assyrian in turn will suffer for it, for "he meaneth not so."

The same God judges all nations. E.g., ch. 17.

Like Amos of northern Israel, whose method we are yet to examine, Isaiah viewed the one God as judge over all the earth, and he considered the affairs of the nations as an open book to God. In the collection of prophecies against the nations, chapters 13-23, he stresses again and again this thought. In chapter 17, "the burden of Damascus," we see a good example of his dealing. All Damascus' particular sins are brought into review and are judged in the light of the conviction that they should have known the God of all the earth. It may seem unfair thus to judge the heathen, but Isaiah, like Paul of the New Testament, believes God has made himself known in some way to all. If Damascus has sinned, it is because, like Israel, "thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation." This chapter sums up the prophet's principle for all peoples: "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them."

The union of the nations in peace and worship. 2:1-4;
19:23-25.

But the prophet's view of the nations has another side. Not only does he believe that a foreign nation can be used of God against his own people, not only does he look upon his God as the judge of them all, but he sees in them wonderful possibilities of fellowship. If Isaiah was a thorough-going isolationist when it came to military alliances, he was just as thorough-going a unionist when it came to the arts of peace.

The famous passage about the nations beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks and learning war no more (2:1-4) finds exact counterpart in the much briefer prophecy of Micah, and we shall discuss its meaning in that connection. Isaiah's really unique contribution in the field of international relations is one of the greatest missionary passages of all literature. What must it have taken for a contemporary to write (19:23-25) that there would come a day when there should be an unguarded highway running from Egypt to Assyria, the great enemy powers of his day; that there should be free access from one torn land to another; and (impossible to think of for a Hebrew!) that Israel should "be the third" (not the first, but the *third*) with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the earth! And lest anyone should fail to get the full import of his meaning, Isaiah insisted that God would bless all three and would definitely call Egypt his people and Assyria the work of his hands, and place Israel third as his inheritance. To all those who want

peace through conquest, to all who vainly imagine they can have some kind of world concord and yet keep national supremacy, Isaiah's words are a perpetual memorial of national immolation. Isaiah was not least patriotic but most truly patriotic when he placed his own nation beneath the others and recognized even the tyrant foes as the people of God.

It is noteworthy that in both these passages about the union of the nations Isaiah sees in religious worship the unifying power. The nations are made one by coming up to God.

ISAIAH AND THE WORLD RULER

It might seem enough that this great prophet should think of God as universal, and that he should conceive of a day when all nations should be made one in reverence for him. But Isaiah's statesmanship is not ethereal; it has its mundane interests always. So it is that he sees, not merely the principle, but the actual government of the nations by a monarch of God's choosing, a king, variously conceived in different parts of this book, but always a ruler whose actual methods of rule bind the nations together.

The Prince of Peace. 9:1-7.

Isaiah knew well that peace among the nations was not to be attained by any easy worldly means. It could be brought to pass and could be sustained only by a Prince who was able to carry the government "on his shoulder." And so he sees this Prince in terms of a wondrous child that shall be born, not for the Jews

only, but for those "beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." In the coming of this child it was to be universally true that "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."

The righteous ruler who brings security. 11:1-10.

Not only did Isaiah know that peace among the nations could never come without a Prince to govern, he also knew that the one necessary quality of that Prince was righteousness. In this lovely passage on the "Branch" that was to grow out of Jesse's stem and rule the earth, he stresses the righteous nature of judgment and of the governing of men, and follows it with the finest of all earth's visions of security, a day when no defense whatever shall be needed, but "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb . . . and a little child shall lead them."

The reign of the righteous king. 32:1-8.

Once more does the prophet picture the righteous king as an actual ruler on the earth, and this time he stresses not only world-wide security but the graciousness of life that comes when real distinctions are made between the "churl" and the "liberal" man. It is only when true manhood is thus appreciated that "a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind."

ISAIAH AND GOD'S SERVANT

But Isaiah's message of a united world is not always seen in terms of a ruler; in the latter part of the book it

is almost always in terms of a servant. Here too lies the distinction of this prophet, in that he saw in the humility of the servant's position the true greatness that should bind together all mankind.

Strengthened Israel is God's servant. 41:8-10.

The astute prophet begins with his own people. He looks upon restored Israel as bearing the rôle of servant. To this end God will be her God. "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

The servant's gracious ministry is to Gentiles. 42:1-9.

Isaiah becomes more daring and declares that God's servant has a ministry to Gentiles. It is to be not a harsh ministry of judgment, but a very tender one to bruised reeds and smoking flax, to blind eyes and imprisoned spirits. Of special importance is the assurance that in such a ministry, however trying and however long in being realized, God's servant "shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment (that is, justice) in the earth."

The servant's world-wide commission. 49:1-6.

Lest some should think that this Gentile ministry of God's servant were a temporary addendum to his usual task, or a limited work for neighboring peoples, we turn with gladness to one of Isaiah's broad, sweeping passages that has the whole world in its vision. He declares that it is "a light thing," that is, one unworthy of a life vocation, for the servant to limit himself to

Israel. He is a "polished shaft" in God's hands; his work is cut out for him: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The servant suffers for all men. 52:13-53:12.

The prophet has begun by thinking of Israel as God's servant to raise up the fallen of her own household. For this he has felt the need of Israel's being purified and strengthened. Such handling will enable at least a portion of Israel to minister outside her own nation. But now, in this greatest of all Isaiah's servant passages, the prophet seems to pass beyond even the purified of Israel and to think of only one individual as fit to be the Servant of God to all humanity. And with an inspiration whose depth amazes us as its breadth delights, he sees this Servant, not as ministering to the needy alone, but as entering into the very secret places of men's inmost souls, bearing their burdens, carrying their sins, dying in their behalf. This marvelous passage is too well-known to need elaboration. Its significance for all mankind is to be found only in him of whom it may be said, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The universal invitation. Ch. 55.

Three other passages in the great volume of Isaiah may be noted for their world-wide application of the servant's work. Although none of them bears the name of the servant, each probably refers to him. The gracious invitation of the fifty-fifth chapter is apparently meant to be extended by God's servant, as the

fourth verse says, "I have given him for a witness to the people. . . . Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." The invitation knows no bounds: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Its urgency is immediate: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Its universalism is the usual prophetic note of repentance and forgiveness: "Let the wicked forsake his way—and let him return unto the Lord."

The response of the Gentiles to the light. 59:16–60:5.

God has covenanted, says Isaiah, to put his Spirit into men in all parts of the earth; therefore the response of the Gentile world to the light of the servant: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . The Gentiles shall come to thy light. . . . The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

The gospel to the brokenhearted. Ch. 61.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me" is probably still to be thought of as the voice of the Servant speaking. He recognizes and accepts his ministry in what is a very beautiful ordination vow. He is "to preach good tidings to the meek," "to bind up the brokenhearted," "to proclaim liberty to the captives," "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." We cannot but remember Jesus' use of this passage in announcing his own ministry to his fellow townsmen of Nazareth (Luke 4:16–32), or how he there related it to a work beyond the bounds of kith and kin. Even here Isaiah speaks of it as a ministry which will "spring forth before all nations."

ISAIAH AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

In considering these passages of the God of the nations and the world of the king and servant to be, we have necessarily presented indirectly some of Isaiah's views on the kind of world that is to be looked for when God is known as Lord. Two other passages that stress the new world order in their own right have a missionary message.

As the rose. Ch. 35.

Deserts were the great menace to travel in ancient days. Among the figures that so gifted a poet would use for renewal was almost bound to be that of a transformed wilderness. But surely we are carried beyond even our fondest hopes by this prophet who sees the whole earth as a desert made to blossom as the rose by the presence of the Lord, who turns springs of water into the wilderness and who makes roads over impassable, arid heights.

The new heavens and the new earth. 65:17-25; 66:18-23.

But in the vision of both a new earth and a new heaven Isaiah brings to grand climax his teaching of a new world order. A new kind of priesthood will arise when God's glory is declared among the Gentiles. There will be a new kind of heaven and a new kind of earth with peace and security as their chief characteristics. The prophet repeats the passage about the wolf and the lamb lying down together, and he pictures a

continual worship of God participated in by "all flesh."

JEREMIAH'S UNIVERSALISM

To turn from Isaiah to Jeremiah is seemingly to descend from great mountain-tops of missionary enthusiasm to rather mediocre plains. Yet we must understand the difference in the situation of the two prophets. Isaiah lived in a day of his people's national integrity. One could still talk as a Hebrew in terms of relations between nations. Even though the latter half of the book of Isaiah refers to a later date, it belongs to a time when the people as a group were under consideration. But Jeremiah lived in a period when the nation as a nation was going to pieces, and when the prophets were inclined to turn their attention to the individual as the hope of humanity. Jeremiah was one of the most intense patriots who ever lived, but he was mistaken for a traitor because he counseled the submission of his nation. At the same time he did pay some attention to other nations, not only to pronounce doom upon their sins but to express a mission of grace. Chapters 46-51 are similar in vein to the chapters on the nations which we noted in Isaiah.

A call to a world-wide task. 1:4-10.

The call of Jeremiah is pictured almost as graphically as that of Isaiah. It was a prenatal call and it is represented as inescapable. It was to find its fulfillment both in works of destruction and of construction. All

the more noteworthy that it should have been a call to world service: "See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms."

Redemption and the potter's wheel. 18:1-10.

The prophets used telling allegories and acted parables. Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house in the midst of days of discouragement over national stubbornness has long been read as a source of eternal comfort. If the potter can catch a vessel marred on the wheel, and before it gets hard remold it to new use, so God can yet catch Israel before she hardens into sin and make her new. But the beauty of this fine allegory of redemption is that Jeremiah makes it apply to all peoples as well as to Israel: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

The new covenant of the heart. 31:31-34.

But it is when Jeremiah turns from his view of the nation to his individualism that he produces his grandest claim to recognition as a universal prophet. His doctrine of the new covenant is justly famed for its scaling the heights of prophetic religion. The old covenant of God with his peculiar people was written on tables of stone and so could easily be broken. But the new covenant is to be inscribed on men's "inward parts" where it cannot be erased, so that God can really be the God of his people. The new covenant can be kept by each man as an individual. Though these words were spoken to Israelites, they are justly seen as ecumenical in their import and are so treated by one

of the great writers of the New Testament (Hebrews 8:8-13).

EZEKIEL AS SHEPHERD IN A LARGER WORLD

The prophet Ezekiel took up many of Jeremiah's teachings and carried them somewhat further, for he lived in a time when the nation had been forced to submit as Jeremiah had foreseen they would and when exile in a foreign land was the lot of many of the people.

Individual responsibility. 18:1-4.

One of Jeremiah's teachings in which Ezekiel seems to have believed most strongly was the doctrine of individualism. The day of one man as a man was dawning more and more unto the fullness of light which the New Testament would shed upon it. Ezekiel sought to kill once for all the effect of the ancient proverb among his people, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He boldly taught that the people of his day could not excuse themselves for their condition by saying that their fathers had brought it upon them by their wickedness. He insisted that his people would be held responsible only for their own wrongdoing: "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." Here is a root of evangelistic preaching to all mankind stooped under the burden of the sin of the ages.

The watchman's duty. 33:1-9.

More than any other man since the time of David, Ezekiel thought of his ministry in terms of being a

shepherd to the scattered flock of his people. He has much to say about the evil shepherds of Israel that devoured the flock and much about the meaning of a true shepherd. In this passage, under the figure of the watchman he advances the same urgent thought of the leader's responsibility for the followers. If anyone knows what others do not know, he is responsible for telling them in order that they may not suffer through his neglect. If he fails to warn them of the evil, then their loss will be his fault and their blood will be required at his hand. This passage has often been used to arouse a church, sleepily content, to its missionary responsibility for those who know not the gospel of God. Ezekiel himself makes it apply equally to any land.

Redemption and the valley of dry bones. 37:1-14.

As the very mundane Jeremiah found in the busy labor of the potter a message of world-wide redemption, so the more ethereal Ezekiel finds in a vision the same message. The people of God were like dead bones scattered in a valley after some terrible destruction. Even after the prophet speaks to them, the bones are merely knit together in inert bodies. But when the spirit of the Lord comes upon them they revive and stand up as men. Although these words are spoken of the children of Israel, their thought is universal. They recognize the reviving grace of God as life's dynamic spark.

The life-giving waters. 47:1-9.

Many other messages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel contain references that are of wide scope, but they either repeat those of Isaiah or are quite brief. Sometimes in rather narrowly Jewish sections, the prophet will burst forth into some passionate utterance that is broader in its view. This is particularly true of Ezekiel, and nowhere is this better seen than in his closing vision. Here through nine rather weary chapters (40-48) he pictures restored Israel in terms of a temple rebuilt in every detail according to an exacting pattern. The new Israel is to be a new house of worship. But near the end of the vision occurs the beautiful symbol of the river, issuing "from under the threshold of the house." The river becomes deeper as it flows, and the angel who shows it to the prophet assures him that the waters "go down into the desert" and that "everything shall live whither the river cometh."

DANIEL: AN APOCALYPTIST'S HOPE

The book of Daniel was counted apocalyptic in the Hebrew canon of the Bible and so does not appear among the prophets. But in our English Bible it is the last of the Major Prophets. Of course apocalypse was only a modification of prophecy, though with a message and method all its own.

The kingdom that shall fill the earth. 2:34, 35; 7:9-14.

The first six chapters of Daniel are the well-known narrative of the life of a Hebrew youth in a foreign

land and his loyalty to his God and his racial customs. Daniel is represented as doing his work in heathen courts. He is said to have obtained proclamations of the universal supremacy of the God of the Hebrews from three world rulers, Nebuchadrezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, and to have influenced a fourth, Cyrus.

Intermingled with this narrative and dominating the last six chapters of the book there is a series of visions of the kingdoms of the earth. Twice there appears the vision of a grander, better kingdom than all these. Once it is the kingdom cut, as a stone, without hands and smiting the image of the kingdoms of this world until it fills the whole earth. Again it is the kingdom which the "one like the Son of man" receives from the Ancient of Days who is seated upon his throne. "There was given him . . . a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." This is Daniel's world view.

The beatitude of the missionary. 12:3.

Near the end of this book occurs a beautiful expression of blessing upon those who work for this righteous kingdom, an expression which has encouraged many to keep on in their work of evangelizing the peoples: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

CHAPTER 5

The Minor Prophets and an Outreaching Faith

THE twelve books of the "Minor" prophets, so-called because they are shorter than the four that are of "Major" length, were prepared from the sermons of a variety of seers who lived over a period of nearly half a millennium. The remains of the preaching of these men, as we have them in these brief notebooks, are frequently composed of so many tiny oracles that we cannot generalize about them as justly as we could in the case of Isaiah and the others whose words make up real volumes. It is not to be wondered at that the messages which have survived from these men are, for the most part, those that bear on special problems of Jewish life and history. When attention is paid to other nations, it is generally to mark them as enemies or at least as unfriendly neighbors. Only one of the collection of twelve—the book of Jonah—is intentionally missionary in its entirety, and its message comes in spite of its leading character, not because of him.

But for these reasons it is all the more remarkable that most of the Minor Prophets contain messages of

universal significance. If we omit Obadiah and Nahum, who specialized in vindictive judgment, the other ten are all men who saw their day in terms of ethical and religious principles that reach out beyond the bounds of nation or age. Many of them rise to great heights of moral insight, probe the depths of understanding of human nature, and make universal application of the worship of God. In a very real sense they have missionary motifs; they are a vital part of the great stream of religious fervor whose flow renews the earth.

HOSEA AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S HEART

The little book that stands at the head of the collection is perhaps the deepest of them all. Its profound understanding is a clear grasp of universal truth. Whenever a prophetic voice speaks to a particular situation by way of analyzing the causes of that situation, whenever it stigmatizes sin, not as so many separate acts but as an attitude of life, whenever it heralds the needed reformation of the political, social, and religious ills of the time in terms of a genuine transformation of heart, that prophetic voice becomes timeless. Such fundamental dealing with real issues lifts the book of Hosea out of its particular reference to northern Israel in the eighth century B.C. and enables it to find its "fulfillment" in humanity of all scenes and ages.

Hosea lived amid outward prosperity. The vigorous reign of Jeroboam II had made Israel noticeable for the first time since Solomon. Walled towns were built, new trade routes were established, a standing army

defended the borders, and luxuries of commerce were flowing in from Egypt and the East. The usual social results of such development had already come: the growth of a wealthy minority, the impoverishment of many who lived on the fringes, and the gradual elimination of any middle class. The usual moral results were also in evidence: cornering of markets, greed in public places, favoritism in the courts, open and wide-spread licentiousness, and a turning to slave trade. Religiously the people were outwardly dutiful. Worship services were well attended; offerings were literally poured out. But the worship was sheer form and the worshippers chafed under ethical preaching as under a wearying load of increasing restrictions.

Now Hosea might have been content to meet such an array of problems simply one by one as a mass of billiard balls for his cue ball to hit in turn. Actually he does picture every one of the evils listed above. But if he had dealt with them merely as a string of single cases he would have ended as a current exhorter of an ancient faith. Even if his oracles had been preserved in a Jewish Bible they would have had little missionary significance. But the genius of Hosea, as of so many of the prophets, was to show the interrelation of social, political, moral, and religious life. And the very special genius of this prophet was to make clear the basic nature of all sin and of all successful turning from sin.

Hosea showed Israel that the economic restlessness of his time, the social injustices of man to man, the sterility of religious observances, and the political fear that resulted in running to Egypt for help from the

rising Assyrians, were all forms of the same thing—unfaithfulness to God. And unfaithfulness could be accounted for in but one way—failure to understand the nature of God. This he illustrated under the figure of a broken home. He uncovered his heart completely by picturing it as his own home, and the poignancy of his picture must have found pathetic response in the many hurt homes of his time. Just as a wife, bound to a man whose life purposes she neither sympathizes with nor understands, seeks relief in restless wandering from one paramour to another, so Israel, not understanding the eternal greatness of God, had strayed from him to one temporal divinity after another. Just as the fickle wife finds that lovers will not always run after her attractions, and as she is forced by rapid degrees to haunting fears and to reckless begging in the streets for favors, so Israel would soon be reduced to the state of a harlot tossed from one violator of people to another. Yet just as Hosea had never abandoned his own affection for her to whom he had given an unchanging love, just as he had pursued her from waywardness to sin and had finally bought her back from the public slave market, so God had never ceased to love Israel. It was his love that had sent her preserving favors when her false pride imagined they had come from others. It was his deep compassion that would still woo her back to himself.

To Hosea, then, the school of unutterable anguish revealed religion as being a “knowledge of God,” by which the prophet did not mean having information about God, but having an understanding of him that

is from the heart. Repentance is a change of heart. The nature of God is pursuing love, a love that knows no obstacles too great, no sin too deep, a love that in its very nature cannot give up the beloved, a love that even casts out the fear that has driven the sinful wanderer to desperation. It is such an understanding of God that lies at the root of John's thought in the New Testament, especially in his First Epistle. It is such a perception of the divine nature of which Francis Thompson wrote in "The Hound of Heaven." It is such a knowledge of God that makes this book of Hosea appeal to human hearts everywhere.

Perhaps the passages that emphasize best this missionary evangel of Hosea are the following.

The essence of religion: 6:4-6.

This little paragraph has rightly become a classic. It is an epitome of Hosea's teaching. Formal "goodness is as a morning cloud and as early dew when it goeth away." What God really yearns for in human response is "mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

The tenderness of God's love: 11:1-4, 8-11.

The love of God has often been preached in sternness. But to the prophet of the broken home and the heart that needs mending, love is forever tender. God was like a father who had taught his little child its first steps. He "drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love." The wail of his heart is, "How shall I give thee up?"

What heart repentance is: 14: 1-5.

Hosea has been called, "Israel's first evangelist." He might be called the preacher of repentance to all mankind. Real penitence is to "return unto the Lord thy God"; it is to "take with you words" of contrition. It is to listen humbly to God saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. . . . I will be as the dew."

JOEL AND THE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT

The motif of Joel is judgment. He calls it "the day of the Lord." There is wide divergence of opinion as to the date of his writing, but the temper of his times is easily discernible. Some national calamity is impending. The moral sensitiveness of the prophet is aroused to connect it with sin, and his vivid imagination pictures it as the whirlwind covering of the land with a plague of locusts. Perhaps a literal locust plague came on Palestine at the same time that the enemy army invaded; such physical devastations were common enough. At all events Joel uses the occasion to preach, not doom alone, but the need and possibility of repentance. Beyond this he sounds a distinctively new note by his preaching of the outpouring of God's spirit. In these two messages lies his claim to universal importance.

The meaning of true repentance: 2: 12-14.

The plea of Hosea, that true repentance is of the heart, is renewed in this fine bit of Joel's preaching.

The dress is different. It is the picture of a wailing multitude, bowed in sorrow before a ruthless invader, and crying out the shame of their land. The prophet bids them cry out the shame of their soul: "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God."

The outpouring of God's spirit: 2:28-32.

This apocalyptic vision seems, in its setting, to be for Jews only. The "all flesh" upon whom God's spirit is to be poured out must be interpreted in the light of the fact that "in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance." Nevertheless no prophet could see so keenly and so far as this without betraying an inner heart of interest in humanity as such. Hence Peter did not go astray from the temper of this oracle when he quoted it at Pentecost and said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:14-21). The abundant giving of God's Holy Spirit to men of the many races gathered at Jerusalem was rightly seen by the Christian apostle as the real fulfillment of Joel's lofty vision. God's Spirit poured out on human hearts everywhere is the goal of prophetic preaching.

AMOS AND THE WORLD'S RIGHTEOUS GOD

Amos was a contemporary of Hosea and preached to the same people. But he was a different man from Hosea. He does not philosophize about the nature of sin; he picks out sins in the concrete and in the plural and stays with them in his preaching. His list of sins—religious, social, ethical—is essentially the same as

Hosea's list, but he makes the sins themselves forever memorable by pithy, pungent figures of description. He has very little to say about the compassionate love of God; he pictures him as the One who is always right in his judgments even when all standards are awry.

The same just God is over all nations: Chs. 1 and 2.

It is at this point of the righteousness of God that Amos' significance beyond his own time is most clearly seen. Israel had come to accept rather complacently the fiery doctrine of Elijah preached fifty years before, "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21, R.V.). They had taken Jehovah for *their* God. It did not matter much whom the surrounding nations had for their gods. Perhaps these gods were good enough for Philistia, Syria, Ammon, Moab, and the rest; the true God was Israel's possession.

The first two chapters of the book of Amos are the clearest of early prophecy in their counteraction of such a narrow notion. The bulk of these chapters is cast in the form of many tiny doom songs, each beginning, "For three transgressions of such and such a people, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." It is not Baal who punishes Tyre, not the tribal god of Damascus who punishes it, but the same Jehovah metes out judgment to Israel's pagan neighbors, and to Judah and Israel as well. In each case he is represented as judging the particular people according to its lights and condemning it for the kind

of wrong it would recognize as wrong. But it is the one God who does the judging, and his principles of judgment are the same for all. In this picture is the very essence of monotheism, without which no missionary effort has meaning.

The universal call: 5:24.

In keeping with this conception of God as the God of all peoples with whom Israel was acquainted is the statement in universal terms of the one great requirement for transforming society: "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Such refreshing of the earth is not limited to any one locality.

JONAH AND THE WILLINGNESS OF LOVE TO FORGIVE

The book of Jonah is unique in many ways, but in none more than in its very presence in the Jewish canon. Apparently it was put there as a protest against the growing particularism of the school of the scribes who thought not alone of Israel belonging only to Jehovah but also of Jehovah belonging only to Israel. Jonah is represented as a prophet with just such a prejudice. The story of his call to preach in Nineveh is the story of horror and repugnance on the part of a thorough nationalist. With Jonah it is not alone that there are enough heathen at home or that the Ninevites are too pagan to be saved, but that the people of Nineveh are so wicked that they ought not to be saved if they could be. This attitude is not so much another instance of failure to understand the heart of Israel's

God, as Hosea had preached it; rather it is an instance of *unwillingness* to understand. Jonah knows well enough that God is love; he knows it too well for the comfort of his crabbed soul. He takes ship in the opposite direction from the leading of that love and he "pays the fare thereof" in more senses than one. He rebels even when he is miraculously saved from the depths of the sea, because his saving is a new call to the preaching of God's limitless love. He roams a third of the way through the streets of the mighty Nineveh before he will open his mouth to preach. He is violently disturbed at the first sight of penitence on the part of his audience, and when the whole city turns to the God of right, the heart of the preacher, which might be expected to be exalted beyond compare at such evidence of his great message, sinks in black despair instead. God has at last to take Jonah directly in hand, and teach him in so many words that he cares for Nineveh, its "much people" and even its cattle.

To be sure, Nineveh had been ruthlessly cruel, and that to Judah. Her unwarranted invasion of lands she desired, her brutality of conquest, her world-wide political ambitions, had made her hated and feared throughout the earth. That God purposed to destroy her was a sweet morsel of knowledge for a Jew like Jonah to roll under his tongue. Let that knowledge be undisclosed until it was too late to help Nineveh. But the whole spirit of this book is the contradiction of that vindictive aim; it is the forerunner of "Love your enemies"; it is the missionary manifesto of the Old Testament.

MICAH'S GROUNDS FOR A UNIVERSAL FAITH

The prophet Micah pled the cause of the Judæan peasants in the days when the great Isaiah was court preacher in Jerusalem. It seems strange that any notes of universalism should come from the fastnesses of Judah's barren hills. Shut in from the outside world to a far greater degree than Israel on the north, Judah developed a loyalty to the worship of Jehovah that ran deeper and lasted longer than any which her sister ever knew. By rights her mountain population should have been the narrowest of the narrow, and in a sense they were. But as in David's day these Judæan hills produced a singer of lyrics that have a universal appeal to the human heart, so in the days before the final decline they produced a prophet who sang of a greater David in strains that have reverberated over all the world. For the religion of the prophets is *essentially* universal. Whenever they reached the foundation of their appeal, it was always the universally applicable character of God. At their best the prophets, however much they worked against the background of a narrow Jewish nationalism, proclaimed the gracious love and yearning of God for all his children of whatever race. Like a dawning light they saw the purpose of the eternal God to save humanity.

The vision of universal worship: 4:1-8.

This passage is identical with that in the second chapter of Isaiah. It must represent a prominent theme of the day, for the country preacher and the city

preacher to use it in the same period. Its message is familiar to all. In a sense it is quite Jewish, for all nations are to come up to Jerusalem for worship and are to get their law from the courts of Jehovah. Yet this is Micah's way of saying what Amos had put in terms of judgment, that the same God is Lord of all peoples. The lines that emphasize the coming of peace have inspired the best dreams of many races. Truly these lines are suited to Micah's surroundings. The impoverished farmers of his day were persecuted by the landed proprietors of Jerusalem who sent regular armies of soldiers upon their fields to collect the heavy exactions and to reduce them further and further into a state of serfdom. War and pillage were the common lot. So it is that Micah foresees a day, not only of the doing away with the swords and the spears, but of the turning of these implements of destruction into means of employment for the dispossessed peasants—the swords beaten into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks. When they have these blessings they will not even *learn* war any more. Such a hope is ecumenical indeed!

The shepherd ruler from Bethlehem: 5:2-7.

In the same vein Micah sees that the ruler of a shepherd people must himself be a shepherd. We have noted that the influence of David was based largely on his carrying over into the kingship the shepherd idea. Now, according to this prophet, another Shepherd was to arise from David's town who should fulfill in himself this ideal of a shepherd governing his flock

for its own good pasturage. This boon he saw in a time when rulers were eating the very life out of their subjects for their own basest satisfaction. The very daring of the contrast produced the greatness of the vision. Small wonder that New Testament writers found in Jesus Christ the only complete justification of such a hope. "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord," pictures the blessing of the Shepherd of all men's souls.

Religion in universal terms: 6:8.

But Micah, like Hosea, had his philosophy of religion. He describes it with thought that can no more be circumscribed by Judean hillsides than it can be by the Jewish race: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" These words have often been called the farthest reaching single sentence in the Old Testament.

HABAKKUK AND TRIUMPHANT FAITH

In the bitter days of the seventh century before Christ, while the suffering heart of Jeremiah was pleading all but hopelessly with his people, a strange young prophet rose to heights of spiritual insight apparently through one trying experience. Habakkuk came into his calling at the time of a sweeping invasion by the Chaldeans. He seemed to relish the thought of preaching to the people until their dull response raised doubts in his own mind. How could a just God allow Judah to suffer so piteously? Granted that the suffer-

ing was for sin, it was at the hands of worse sinners than they. Even though God was using the wicked Chaldeans as his tool, and would punish them later on for their own wickedness, how could such thoughts avail to sustain the people while their lands were being invaded and their fields burned and pillaged?

Habakkuk found his answer in the meaning of faith. Men were not supposed to reason it out. The intellect could not interpret satisfactorily in such an hour. But it was still possible to trust God, and on this trust men could sustain their very souls. Such a message has an appeal for all the world where unjust suffering has come. Habakkuk's missionary notes are not so much to be found in selected passages, as in occasional great sayings that dot the paragraphs of his experience.

The best of these sayings are three in number. "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4) is the text on which Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians and on which Martin Luther grounded the Protestant Reformation, so that its lines have truly gone out into all the earth. Its picture is of a storehouse, still left standing in the land when the granaries and the grain stacks have been carried off. This storehouse is faith, and a man who is just can live out of it as from a full barn.

Another of Habakkuk's outstanding faith passages is the closing part of the final hymn of thanksgiving with which he dares to look forward to a better day (3:17-19). Here faith really reaches its summit. Although all the produce of the field shall fail and all the crops and herds be destroyed by invading armies, yet the prophet will rejoice in God because of what

God is in himself. Such a faith is the forerunner of that in Hebrews which is "the substance of things hoped for."

Perhaps the most directly missionary of Habakkuk's beautiful sayings is that of 2:14: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." For a seer of a small and oppressed people to envision the day when his own God should be known, not alone in the environs of his own land or of that of the invader but throughout all the earth, is truly to hold aloft the torch that has lighted the missionary's way in every new advance.

ZEPHANIAH AND THE "TERRIBLE MEEK"

Another contemporary of Jeremiah in the awful days of impending doom was Zephaniah. Like Joel he writes of "the day of the Lord." Unlike Joel, he has no great vision of the all-prevading Spirit of God, yet he is not without his message of world-wide significance. Zephaniah has looked upon the proud in all their haughtiness, he has witnessed the continuous triumph of military might, but he is firmly grounded in his faith that in the long run the meek are mightier. It is from Zephaniah that much of the inspiration for Jesus' treatment of the meek in his Sermon on the Mount is drawn.

The great passage on meekness, 2:1-11, is a quiet and steady pounding away at the idea. The nations which are "not desired" by other peoples shall see "the day of the Lord." "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth" is the prophet's cry—a cry which knows

no distinction of race. The Lord himself has witnessed the loftiness of the proud. He has heard their reproaches on the weaker nations. To these who suffer the counsel is not "Seek revenge," but "Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

HAGGAI: THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

The last three prophets of the Old Testament deal with times after the exile. Of these the first two are concerned with the immediate and local task of rebuilding the Jewish temple. We cannot expect to find much that is of general concern.

In Haggai's brief collection of oracles on the temple there occurs one far-seeing prophecy, "Yet once, . . . and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come" (2:6, 7). This is a truly remarkable realization that all nations have the same fundamental desire (R.V. "desirable things"), that what is good for one is good for all. Here is a basic principle for missionary preaching to the nationalisms of today, though it may take the shaking of all nations, as Haggai believed it would, to get them to see it.

ZECHARIAH: THE THREE BLESSINGS

The first part of the book of Zechariah is contemporaneous with the book of Haggai and deals largely with the reconstruction of the temple following the return of some of the Jews from exile. The great names of Joshua and Zerubbabel, priestly and princely leaders of the people, are exalted as the very agents of

God in the doing of a worthy deed. But the prophet realizes that all the might these leaders can muster will not be sufficient to achieve their task, and so, almost in the mood of Joel, he reminds them and their followers that it is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (4:6).

From chapter 8 on, the book of Zechariah is a somewhat obscure apocalypse. Its images are complicated, and the message apparently has nothing to do with the post-exilic temple. But there are other changes, just as vivid, which this prophet foresees.

The eighth chapter itself is remarkable for its insistence that the Jewish nation needs to be changed. And when its change is accomplished, then the prophet believes the nation is destined for a missionary function: "As ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing" (8:13).

Again, this prophet envisions a universal king. In words which Jesus applied to himself at the time of his entry into Jerusalem for his final week, the seer bids Jerusalem to "rejoice"; for "behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. . . . And he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even unto sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (9:9,10). Here, in a day of evident fear and turmoil among nations, when rulers dominated ruthlessly, this prophet looks forward to a king who shall speak peace and who shall therefore have a world-wide dominion.

Elsewhere (14:9) he reiterates this universal hope and names the Lord himself as the king: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one."

Thus, if we take the book of Zechariah as a whole, we have three blessings of universal import: the spirit of the Lord as the true might of the earth, a transformed nation as a blessing in the midst of the earth, and a king of peace to rule the earth.

MALACHI AND THE PREPARED WAY

The last book of the Old Testament is very particularistic in its dealing with racial problems of Judaism. Yet, it contains a good deal of material, considering its brevity, that has to do with the preparation of the way of God into the hearts of men. In two well-known passages (3:1-3; 4:5, 6) we read of the "messenger" who shall go before the Lord's face to refine the people and to turn their hearts to one another. He is described as an Elijah, and his function is another of those that is taken over by the New Testament and applied to one of its characters—this time to John the Baptist as the preparer of the way for Christ before the people of the Jordan valley. Only in the sense that the universal requirement for God's entrance is a prepared heart, do these passages have any wide significance. But there is another saying of Malachi that is of distinctly broader scope than the lives of the peculiar people: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (4:2). The Old Testament ends with looking toward the world's sunrise.

THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER 6

The Mission of the Life of Christ

It is a familiar adage that God had one Son and he made him a missionary. In the person and work of Jesus Christ centers the missionary passion of the Christian evangel. The gospels, devoted as they are to the earthly life of Jesus, are the church's primary missionary documents. They do not simply contain material of world-wide interest; they directly seek converts to the person and the way of life set forth by their material. All four of them are rightly called the work of evangelists. In a sense every line of them is a missionary appeal, but it is worth while to pick out from their description and interpretation the high points of ecumenical concern.

It has seemed best to group these points around two main foci, the life of Christ and the teachings of Christ. Not that any sharp line can be drawn between the two, for Jesus taught as much by the way he lived as by word of mouth. But for the sake of convenience the attempt is made in this chapter to classify the gospel events and interpretations of Jesus that have widest appeal, reserving for the next chapter a study of particular teachings of Jesus that have missionary import.

MISSIONARY MESSAGES OF THE INCARNATION

At the very outset three of the gospels interpret the coming of Jesus in terms of significance for all mankind.

The Word made flesh: John 1:1-14.

The famous prologue to the gospel of John begins farthest back. Here we have not alone the philosophy of the Christian religion which pictures the eternal Mediator as divine Creator, but we have such missionary motifs as his being the "life" and "the light of men," "the true Light which lighteth every man," the One who, though "his own received him not," gave to "as many as received him . . . power to become the sons of God." These world powers John attributes to him as a pre-incarnate Presence. Then comes the wondrous sequel: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." Truly we should have to beggar language to find any clearer portrayal of Jesus' incarnation as bringing to earth the grace of God for all men whether they have been in the privileged line of "his own" or not.

The prepared ways of salvation: Luke 1:76-79

The gospel of Luke does not contain as many specific missionary teachings of Jesus as do Matthew and John, but it has the most natural and quietly assumed breadth of any of the four. Heaven and earth, Jew

and Gentile, vie with each other in the pages of this gospel to proclaim that "There's a wideness in God's mercy." Here Zacharias, a priest of Judaism, rejoices in the birth of his son John as one who is to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways," ways whose purpose he describes as being "to give knowledge of salvation," "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (a direct reference to Gentiles), and then finally (with thought of his own Jewish people) "to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The angelic message of good will: Luke 2:13, 14.

The echo of Zacharias' words about the way of peace had scarce died away from the temple courts when it sounded from the skies. "And on earth peace" is Luke's report of the song of the angels at the hour of Jesus' birth, a song that announced the fulfilling of the prophets' dreams. This peace is immediately identified with good will, the greatest of all earth's good things; for only in men of good will could God be "well pleased," as the Revised Version has it.

The adoration of men of all classes: Luke 2:8-20; Matt. 2:1-12.

The familiar stories of the visits of shepherds and wise men to the cradle of the infant Lord are among the strongest evidence of the gospels' faith in the universal appeal of Jesus. Luke gives us the commonest and nearest class—nothing quite so common around

Bethlehem as shepherds. Matthew gives us the most uncommon class and one that comes from far, sages of wide learning and travel. Both gospels are sure that even the babe has in him the power to draw all men unto him.

Simeon's prayer: Luke 2:22-32.

Luke cannot get away very long from the thought that has impressed him so deeply, that the most Jewish of the Jews of Jesus' day could see, if they were pious men, the universal appeal of the Savior. Simeon is old and has been waiting for years to see the Lord's Christ. He is a worthy representative of that type of men to which the Nathaniel of John's gospel belongs—men who were daily expecting a visible manifestation of God's Messiah. It would have been most natural for Simeon to think of such a Messiah in decidedly Jewish terms, even in terms of an earthly ruler on a temporal throne. Many of his less pious contemporaries so thought of him. But Luke pictures Simeon as taking the Christ child in his arms and praising God for a salvation "prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Gentiles first, then Israel! An old Jew rejoicing for the good of all people!

Luke's genealogy, back to Adam: Luke 3:23-38.

Even in the prosaic account of Jesus' lineage Luke has outdone himself to proclaim a Savior for all men. His genealogy is traced clear back to Adam, the ancestor of humanity.

A BOYHOOD OF COSMOPOLITAN ENVIRONMENT

Few errors do as much harm to our thought of Jesus as the interpretation of his early years which makes him a backwoods peasant from an unpretentious countryside where the problems of life were simple and the contacts few. Galilee was a little stretch, thirty by sixty miles, but teeming with people. Even if we must discredit Josephus' estimate of three million people, the density of population in the villages that crowded around its tiny farm plots was appalling. Jesus grew up among men, and the bitter struggle for existence on the part of himself and his associates is deeply marked in the brief sketches of our gospels. Such a youth prepared him, humanly speaking, to "know what was in man" and so to have a mission to man in general. Here are some of the more evident facts:

A mother with passion for the underprivileged: Luke 1:46-56.

We Protestants often fail to do justice to Mary. We have rightly turned from idolatry of her, but we miss a real understanding of the preparation of Jesus for his life ministry if we do not treasure up the bits of characterization of his mother which our gospels give us. In this song of Mary that we call the "Magnificat," there is an early emphasis on blessing God, and we usually stop there. But the song goes on to announce plainly that the reason for blessing God is that he has chosen a poor woman rather than a wealthy one to be

the mother of his Son, and in so doing he has made his Son a leveler of society:

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.

No doubt Jesus' parables of the new wine poured into wine vats too old to hold its vigor and the new patch sewed once too often onto the threadbare garment are reminiscences of the poverty and struggle of the home in which he was reared. In this same gospel of Luke, Jesus is represented as telling his disciples, "Blessed are ye poor," and "Woe unto you that are rich."

A refugee in Egypt: Matt. 2:13-18.

A modern world which has become conscious of the multitudes of families, and especially of little children, who are driven from their homes for all or a part of their lives, will do well to sit and ponder before the fact that Jesus spent his early childhood as a refugee in Egypt from the face of King Herod. Here he came in contact with a different civilization than that of Palestine.

A training in toil: Mark 6:1-3

The carpenter's bench was for Jesus no merely pious example of the dignity of labor. Indeed Mark seems to drop the hint that family necessity kept Jesus at hard work. The church fathers tell us that Joseph died early in life. Mark mentions at least six children of Mary—all younger than the first-born Jesus. It needs no flight

of imagination to guess why the carpenter of Nazareth did not enter his public ministry until he was thirty years of age; he was raising a family!

A home on an international highroad: Matt. 2:22,23.

And where did he raise that family? Matthew significantly speaks of it as "the parts of Galilee." Through Nazareth ran a highway north and south on which travelers from Rome and Corinth and Ephesus in the west, and Damascus and Mesopotamia in the east, traveled to and from Egypt. The carpenter shop must have supplied many more than Galilean farmers. The carpenter must have traded with men of many nations.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE HUMAN BURDEN

It is one thing to live and work in a cosmopolitan environment. It is another to care so much for the people one meets as to take their burdens on one's soul. We are familiar with the teaching that Jesus assumed the human load of sin upon his cross. But according to our gospels he took upon him human woe and the need of righteousness in human life from the very outset.

At the baptism: Matt. 3:13-17.

The gospels picture John as loath to baptize Jesus. John's feeling of humility in the presence of one so great is the obvious reason. But our first gospel adds to this Jesus' appeal to John, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." That is to say, the people were being baptized in token of the forgive-

ness of their sins and their feeling of the need of righteousness. Jesus was to be baptized too that he might identify himself with that need and thus "fulfill all righteousness," fill full the cup of righteousness for men. Thus his baptism was for all mankind.

At the temptation: Matt. 4:1-11.

Jesus was really tempted. Piety often seeks to tone down that statement in the interest of preserving his deity. But temptation did not disprove Jesus' deity, neither did he lay aside his divine for his human nature in order to be tempted. Rather he took into the experience of his temptation his whole divine power and thus was able to overcome. For this reason "he is able to succor them that are tempted." He does not have any advantage in meeting his temptation that he does not pass on to us. By his very divine power he not only conquered the tempter himself but he makes available unique strength for us in our severe hour. It is on this account that we are never tempted above that which we are able to withstand, but find in every hour of testing a good way of escape (I Cor. 10:13).

But the temptation itself is none the less real. It had its terrific appeal for Jesus. The voice at the baptismal waters had declared in no uncertain terms, "This is my beloved Son." Now at the point of his greatest certainty the tempter strikes, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread—If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." That is just the way men meet temptation; they are taunted into doubting the things of which they are surest and so are

dragged down to ruin. And Jesus was tempted along the common avenues of men's experience: to use the special power lodged with him, but to use it selfishly by feeding himself instead of the hungry multitudes; to win the allegiance of men through show by displaying himself sensationally in a drop from the pinnacle of the temple; to win the kingdoms of the world without a cross by owning supreme allegiance to his tempter. Selfishness, short-cuts, painless devices; these are humanity's lure to spiritual death. Jesus bore that human burden of temptation, and he bore it all through his life, for Luke tells us that at the end of the desert experience the devil "departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:13). But he bore it triumphantly, and so made possible humanity's triumph.

In the course of his ministry: Matt. 8:19,20.

The identification of Jesus with human problems of living is well recognized. The understanding that lay behind his sympathy constitutes one of his most familiar appeals. We draw no veil before the fact that he was often hungry, weary, and friendless. The pathos of his acceptance of the common lot is perhaps best described by this little saying that Matthew records, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

THE MISSIONARY USE OF HELPERS

One of the sure tests of greatness in a leader is his ability to pass responsibility on to his followers.

And when a leader is able to inspire and inform those followers so as to make their efforts center in the extension of his ideals, his significance for wider circles is well attested. Jesus' relations with his helpers is peculiarly important. He spent much of his precious time with them alone. Nearly half of the gospel of John is given to a description of his private talks with them. The Synoptics represent him as asking their counsel as well as giving them repeated instructions.

The commission of the twelve: Mark 3:13-19.

The care with which Jesus selected his inner group is emphasized by the gospel writers. Luke says that he prayed all night before the choice was made. Mark makes clear the threefold purpose of the choice, "that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons" (R.V.). Fellowship with his presence, proclaiming the evangel, and healing men's bodies and minds; these were the ends of the call of the special group, and they were ends that met in the great missionary purpose that underlay his own ministry. They were the forerunners of the "Great Commission."

The sending of the seventy: Luke 10:1-20.

Among the most interesting records of Jesus' work is the mission of the seventy. According to the gospels it was a hurried mission, it was the preparation for a great evangelistic tour by Jesus himself: he "sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." Hence the injunc-

tions to take no money, to take only light clothing, and to be content with such entertainment as they could get that would least interfere with their work. Such is often the strategy of pioneer missionary occupation.

The use of women helpers: Luke 8:1-3.

Women's auxiliaries are no modern idea. They were well-known in the New Testament and Jesus himself organized them. While it is true that the women who are listed in this brief passage in Luke are said to have ministered to him, they are pictured as accompanying him in his whirlwind preaching tour of every city and village of Galilee.

SINGLING OUT OF NEEDY CLASSES

The ministry of Jesus and his helpers is noteworthy, especially in the Synoptic gospels, for its singling out of needy classes. It was a ministry of compassion to those who were overlooked by society. It was a ministry of identification with all kinds of people, not merely of feeling sorry for them but of going out of the way to do something for them, and that regardless of their deserts. Again and again the gospels picture Jesus as "moved with compassion" toward the multitudes because they were "as sheep not having a shepherd."

The sick and suffering: Matt. 9:1-8.

The modern world takes it for granted that the sick should be cared for. We scarcely realize that the unquestioning nature of our helpfulness toward them

stems from the example of Jesus. The sick were cared for before he came, but all too often the sick and afflicted were feared as those possessed of some evil power and therefore to be let alone, or as visited by God for some wrong-doing and therefore to be allowed to suffer as God willed. This familiar story of the healing of the palsied man brought by four friends to Jesus connects the very forgiveness of sin with the cure of disease, a combination of purposes of ministry that is common in other parts of our New Testament and in the missionary work of the modern church.

The sorrowing: Luke 7:11-17.

While Jesus had no sympathy with the hired mourners who were so common in his day, his tenderness toward real grief is everywhere emphasized. This incident of the widow of Nain who had lost her only son is the classic for a mission of kindness toward helpless sorrow.

The sinful: John 5:1-14.

The word "sinner" was a technical term in Jesus' day as it is in certain localities now. It meant a person who had committed certain acts that were contrary to law or the accepted standard of society and who were therefore to be shunned by polite "righteous" citizens. By even noticing these people Jesus brought upon himself much unfavorable notoriety that he could easily have avoided, but the nature of his missionary zeal would not permit him to overlook them. He had come "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repent-

ance." The man at Bethesda's pool had testified for thirty-eight years to the unconcern of the religious leaders of his day. His sin had apparently brought him to his helpless state. But Jesus not only healed him, he followed him up in spite of ridicule and warned him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

The outcast: Luke 7:36-50; John 9:34-38.

The supreme example of the antagonism of Jesus' day to unsocial beings was found in the popular attitude toward the outcasts. These might be people with loathsome diseases, the technical sinners of deepest dye, and also those who for many other possible reasons had put themselves outside the pale of Israel. The man at the pool might be tolerated as a sinner, but the woman who came into Simon's banquet hall from the life of the streets was worthy only of contempt. The man born blind was not even an object of pity, but only of theological speculation: "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Yet Jesus found in the outcast woman one who loved more deeply than ever a sophisticated Pharisee could understand, and he found in the blind man one of the few ready recognitions of his sonship to God. His appeal was to unnoticed or condemned humanity.

MINISTRY OUTSIDE OF JUDAISM

It is true that there are instances in the gospels in which Jesus limits his work to his fellow countrymen. According to Matthew, when he sends out the twelve

on the mission tour of Galilee, he says to them, "Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matt. 10:5), and when he is on a visit to Tyre and Sidon, he responds to the Greek woman's plea for help with the somewhat forbidding words, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Even the fact that he finally helped her can hardly dim the feeling that his attitude is not that of one on a world-wide mission. But these are exceptions. In many other instances Jesus holds up to praise the faith of foreigners and goes out of his way to minister to people of all races. His nationalism was strong, but it became only the starting point for a service that he himself said should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth.

To Samaritans: John 4:1-42; Luke 9:51-56.

According to the gospel of John, Jesus ministered to the people of Samaria very early in his career. "He must needs go through Samaria." The story of the woman at Sychar's well and of the host of Samaritans who came out to hear Jesus speak and to beg him to remain with them a while is the tale of a wondrous revelation. To none of his Jewish brethren is he recorded to have uttered anything any more profound than his allegory of the inner well springing up into life eternal, nor did he ever say to them any clearer or finer word about God than he pronounced to the Samaritan woman, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Even here he reminds her that "salvation is of the Jews," but

he brushes aside all reference to local pride when he declares that "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." We are prepared by this early ministry for Luke's note to the effect that as he left Galilee for the last time he "sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him."

To Romans: Luke 7:1-10.

With the Roman soldiery occupying Palestine as they did in the first century, it is not to be wondered at that Jesus came into contact with cases of need among them. It is almost amusing to see the way in which the Jewish elders excused their request for attention to the plea of the Roman centurion on the ground that he had built them a synagogue. Jesus went quite willingly on the mission of aid to the centurion's sick servant, but when he found that the Roman did not consider himself worthy to have him under his roof but trusted him to speak the healing word from afar, the Master stopped short and marvelled, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

To Greeks: Mark 7:24-37; John 12:20-24.

It is Mark who tells us that the woman to whom Jesus first refused aid and then ministered was a Greek. If this should leave a feeling of reluctance on his part, it is counterbalanced by his delight in the visit of the Greeks to him in Jerusalem during the final week of his ministry. "We would see Jesus," they said to his

disciples. He saw in them, as John's gospel records the incident, the symbol of men from everywhere coming to him when he should be lifted up from the earth.

On the east of the Jordan lived men of many nations. The "Decapolis", or the ten Greek cities, lay just the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Mark mentions twice Jesus' ministry in this Greek region (5:20; 7:31). Here it was that Jesus cured the Gadarene demoniac; here it was that his fame was spread as he set sail for the western shore of the lake. Here it was later that he healed the deaf and dumb man and tried to keep the news from spreading because of the enthusiasm for his presence with which this region responded.

To Perea: John 10:39-42.

Also on the east of the Jordan, but toward the south, lay the region of Perea. Here Jesus retired from Jerusalem to get away from the mob spirit in the great city. Here John tells us that many resorted to him and believed on him. By no means all of his short earthly ministry was spent with his own people.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST'S DEATH

The gospels all tell at length the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. They devote a really disproportionate part of their space to this. But they have very little to say by way of interpretation of the meaning of his death. That is to be found in later parts of

the New Testament. It is, therefore, all the more impressive that what little interpretation there is in the gospels themselves is in terms of the universal significance of that death.

On behalf of his followers: Luke 22:14-20.

The scene in the upper room is ever memorable for its intimate love and trust. Here it is that Jesus refers to the emblem of his death as "the cup of the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." He says very simply, yet very directly, "This is my body which is given for you."

As redemption for all men: Matt. 20:28; Luke 24:47.

At least twice in our gospels the broader potency of the death of Christ as the redeeming power available for all is stressed. After teaching his disciples the lesson in humility which they so much needed, Jesus refers to his approaching death as the climax in the redemptive purpose of his own humble ministry: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And on the Emmaus road, that first Easter evening, Jesus interpreted his death and resurrection for two of his followers in terms of a world-wide redemption: "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

THE DYNAMIC OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

But even in the gospels, as well as in the epistles, it is the resurrection of Christ that is the cornerstone of the apostles' faith. It is this glorious fact that sheds its light back on all the narrative of his meek way and makes possible the telling of that narrative as an evangel of good tidings.

Death and resurrection united in redemption: John 10: 15-18.

The philosophy of redemption as issuing from the death and resurrection jointly is tellingly expressed in this passage from John. The good shepherd allegory has given Jesus the opportunity to make it clear that he is no hireling whose own the sheep are not, but that he lays down his very life for the sheep. Here is a labor of love in behalf of redemption. Yet he states at this very juncture that the goal in laying his life down is that he may take it up again, and he emphasizes that he has as much power to take it up as he has to lay it down.

The missionary impetus of the church: Matt. 28:1-7.

The very missionary gospel of Matthew cannot tell the story of the empty tomb without turning it into a rallying call for the mission of the church. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," says the angel to the women, "and go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." "Come, see; go . . . tell." That is the missionary experience and the missionary incentive of the resurrection morn. None who has ever

witnessed the power of this resurrection can keep it to himself. Human nature is not constructed to hold back such a marvel. The world itself cannot contain the flood of such a message. Missions cannot be turned back; they are inevitable from the fact of the risen Lord.

CHAPTER 7

Universal Notes in the Teachings of Christ

THE teachings of Jesus have become both the admiration and the despair of modern Christians. There was a time when the church tended to discount their value in comparison with the "more theological" parts of the New Testament. Then there came a period when they were worshipped with a passion that knew no bounds. Religious leaders abandoned themselves to an intimate study and application of the words of Jesus as the necessary means to the transformation of society. They ardently believed that the use of Jesus' teachings would produce social changes with the orderliness of an evolutionary process. When this failed to occur over great areas, reaction set in. Men began to question whether the "program of Jesus" would work in such a world as ours. Today much is being written in admiration of Jesus' teachings as a beautiful ideal whose chief function is accomplished when they cause a tension in the consciences of men who know them and do them not. They are far beyond the reach of any except some small group of Christians who live in intimate fellowship, or of an occasional daring soul who dwells in thought above

the world, or of some age that is consciously facing catastrophe.

The modern missionary movement came to flower during the time of growing devotion to Jesus' teachings. The attitude was "Trust and obey, for there's no other way." Specific teachings were pointed to that commanded the missionary effort, and these were, in the minds of many leaders, sufficient to make it inevitable. With the spreading of a feeling of despair about following Jesus, this basic nerve of the missionary movement has been cut as far as the willingness of many is concerned. If any of Jesus' teachings are aerial dreams, perhaps those on missions are among them. Add to this feeling the growingly influential contention of some scholars that the specific teachings of Jesus probably represent sermonic arrangements of his thought by the Christian community for evangelistic purposes, and you have even less of a sense of obligation to carry out his commands. The dominance of such an attitude, if dominant it should become, would not indeed remove the obligation to search out diligently his particular teachings; much still can be said on the subject of the duty of the Christian to take them seriously and follow them to the utmost of his ability. Perhaps the belief that they are impractical is based on the fear of facing their consequences. But the mind-set of today at least makes plain the advantage of approaching the thought of Jesus not alone from the standpoint of the specific orders he is said to have issued, but from the mood and implication of his sayings and parables, his arguments and pronouncements,

as they have been preserved for us in the gospels. The missionary motive needs to be rooted in the far outreach of Jesus' message. Specific well-known teachings gain fresh power when they are thought of as part of the wide sweep of his spirit.

THE UNIVERSAL LOVE OF GOD

Few facts have received more emphasis in modern studies of the teachings of Jesus than his insistence on God's love for all men. If such an emphasis has sometimes tended to make God seem sentimental or to make the New Testament appear man-centered rather than God-centered, the fault has not been with the fact. The recent reaction in theology toward thinking of God as holy and removed can never be allowed to violate Jesus' beautiful pictures of the self-giving and man-seeking Father.

The parables of the lost: Luke 15.

The seeking nature of this love has been made forever memorable by Luke's collection of parables of the lost. The one lost sheep in a flock of a hundred disturbs the shepherd to the extent of sending him hunting in the wilderness until he finds it. The avid hunger of a heart-sick matron, missing a coin of homely significance in her life, gives her no rest until she has cleaned her entire house in its search. The broken spirit of a lonely father watches long for his wayward son's return in a story as unforgettable as life itself. And in each case Jesus emphasizes the complete happiness of the successful search. The shepherd "calleth together

his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost"; likewise the housewife "calloeth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost"; and in the father's house, when the broken boy came home after ruining his family's reputation and squandering the patrimony, still "they began to be merry", the only rebuke being for the grudging brother who was too solemn to join the gaiety. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Thus does Jesus engrave on the hearts of men his sketch of the seeking love of God.

The parable of the great supper: Luke 14:15-24.

But not only does God's love seek, it seeks in unexpected places. If those who should most naturally respond to its overtures begin with one consent to make excuse, God's love goes out for those who are not only lost but who have never been known in religious surroundings. There can be no mistaking the missionary implications of "the highways and hedges" where his servants seek them out and "compel them to come in."

The parable of the husbandmen: Matt. 21:33-44.

This same idea is carried out in one of the harshest of Jesus' parables, especially in Matthew's version of it. Not only does the lord of the vineyard rescue his possession from the hands of its unscrupulous tenants and give it to others, but the moral is pointed in no

uncertain terms for the non-missionary: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Jesus makes it plain that the Jews were intended to be husbandmen of God's vineyard. Their rejection was the result of a failure to be missionary.

The given Son: John 3:14-17.

In the parable of the husbandmen the Son appears in a pathetic rôle. He suffers most intensely of all at the hands of evil men. It is the judgment of God on men's treatment of the Son that leads him to extend his kingdom to others, though his justice gives also opportunity to see his love for other people. But in the classic story of Jesus' interview with Nicodemus, the Son appears, not as judge of men's wickedness, nor even primarily as sufferer at the hands of men, but outstandingly as the revealer of God's love. In the gospel of John, the term "world" has not only the suggestion of breadth but also of the sphere of evil. God chooses the very evil to spend his love upon. "God so loved the world that he gave." God sent his Son, not to condemn but to save the world, and any condemning that is done comes from the world's refusal of God's love. The "whosoever" of this famous broadcast is more satisfying as a picture of Jesus' catholicity than any number of commands to evangelize "the heathen."

THE UNIVERSAL APPEAL OF JESUS

But not only are the gospels written in the assurance of God's world-wide love, they stress also Jesus' teaching that he himself has a world-wide appeal.

The invitation to the heavy-laden: Matt. 11:25-30.

Perhaps no passage in the Synoptic Gospels sounds more like the Gospel of John than this bit from Matthew. Here Jesus emphasizes that God surprises men by revealing himself to the unsophisticated rather than to the "wise," and that he and his Father know each other as no man knows God. But Matthew follows this rather philosophical account of Jesus' teaching with the touching appeal, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden." Jesus is full of assurance that he will give rest to the souls of all who are sufficiently "meek and lowly in heart" to feel his attractiveness, and that he will enable them to bear his yoke.

Universal response to the kingdom: Luke 13:29,30.

Jesus predicted that his presentation of his kingdom would meet with response from all parts of the world. Not only did he teach that the kingdom, like tiny seed or like leaven, would spread rapidly through all the earth (Matt. 13:31-33), not only did he make clear that it would grow in ways that men knew not of (Mark 4:26-29), but he boldly declared, "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." His kingdom was to be world-wide. He taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come—in earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus drawing all men: John 12:20-32.

But if the teaching on the kingdom seems to be somewhat impersonal, Jesus also makes it clear that in

himself he is the universal magnet. No passage emphasizes this faith of his more clearly than that in which the Fourth Gospel tells of the visit of the Greeks to Jerusalem. They are to him the emblem of the fruitfulness of his approaching death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"—not just Jews and Greeks, but all races of men.

JOHANNINE FIGURES FOR THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST

The Gospel of John is filled with telling imagery by which the universal appeal of Jesus is made clear. The common elements of life express best what he is to all men.

The bread of life: John 6:22-58.

It was after the feeding of the multitude by the lake that Jesus is reported to have expostulated at length with the crowd. They had followed him around the shore the next morning in order to get more food. He pleads with them not to "labor for the meat which perisheth," but rather to work the work of faith in God. The people express themselves as thoroughly satisfied with Moses' work for them, but Jesus reminds them that whereas Moses fed their fathers with manna and yet could not prevent their dying in the wilderness, he will give them bread to eat which shall make them live forever. In answer to their astonished questions as to his meanings, he employs a common oriental figure. They must eat him, that is, they must become as intimately one in fellowship with him as a person

becomes one with what he eats. Then comes the missionary urgency of Jesus' representation of himself: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

The water of life: John 4:5-14; 7:37-39.

In similar vein the Jesus of John's gospel presents himself as the water of life. Twice this figure occurs. Once, in the case of his conversation with the woman at Sychar's well, he contrasts himself with the well water she is laboring so wearily to draw: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," and this water is again for "whosoever drinketh." On the occasion of his visit to the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Jesus takes advantage of the symbolism of the feast to indicate how universal is his appeal. The celebrants were laboriously hauling their water from the pool of Siloam in symbol of the hardships of their ancestors who sought water in the wilderness. Jesus stood forth before them with the daring statement, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

The light of the world: John 8:12-30.

Apparently it was at this same feast that another of the famed figures for Jesus' universal appeal was graven ineradicably upon the people's minds. It was the custom to darken the city by night except for one court of the temple, illumined to suggest the pillar of fire which by night had led the wilderness wanderers. On the last night of the feast even this court was kept

in darkness and the multitudes stood in awe-inspired silence, worshipping in the darkness. If we may carry over to this scene the words of the preceding event at the same feast, then it was on this last day, possibly on this last night, at the very hour of the awful stillness of thousands massed before the darkened temple, that Jesus "spake again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world." Surely this is the most dramatic touch in all the gospels, and it is made in the interest of the universal Christ.

The good shepherd: John 10:1-16.

Again, there is the lovely figure of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Not only does he declare that he is the only one who does not rob and kill, the only one who really cares for the sheep, but he says, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and shall find pasture";—the stress on "any man" once more. And as though to leave no possible room for doubt, the passage includes the very missionary assurance, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also must I bring." It is these incidental remarks attributed to Jesus that show more than lengthy doctrinal development could ever show, his spirit of appeal to all the world.

The resurrection: John 11:20-26.

Lazarus' tomb furnishes another dramatic setting for Jesus' proclamation of himself in universal terms. Martha, as a good Pharisee, has met Jesus' challenge of faith in the resurrection of the body in the future. But

Jesus challenges her to believe in him to a more wonderful extent still. She must believe that such as he can raise the dead here and now, not only the physically dead, but the morally dead as well: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live [that is, in the future]: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die [obviously in the spiritual sense]." There is the "whosoever" again.

The way of life: John 14:1-6.

Around the table at their farewell meal, the Master seeks to comfort the hearts of his sorrowing friends. He assures them that they know enough about him not to be left in misery. One of them urges him to say definitely by what way he is going, and Jesus turns the question, as he so often does, with a surprising answer: "I am the way." The only road to God, he says, is himself, and "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Here is the same universal in its negative form.

JESUS' CONCERN FOR ALL MEN

But we would not be true to the missionary spirit of the gospels if we left the case at the point of Jesus' magnetic appeal. It is not that he stands off in some out-of-the-way corner and draws all men to him, but that he shares in the seeking love of God. The essence of the missionary passion is to be concerned for men as they are, and this concern is manifest again and again in the teachings, as it is in the example, of Jesus.

The worth of man to God: Matt. 10:29-31; 12:10.

Although it is out of fashion in many quarters to acknowledge it, Jesus strongly emphasizes in his teaching that human nature is worth much in God's sight. The market value of sparrows was quite low, yet Jesus can use a low market to drive home the Father's care. God is concerned with sparrows; not one falls to the ground without his knowledge. How much more is he concerned with men! The market value of sheep, on the other hand, was relatively high in Jesus' day; the sheep was one of the main commodities of exchange. Traders could unthinkingly justify the rescue of a sheep from a pit on the Sabbath because of its monetary worth, no matter how legalistic these same traders might be in making people observe the day. But Jesus insists that man, in the eyes of God, is worth far more than the most valuable sheep, and that therefore to rescue him from the pit of some physical or spiritual calamity is a more blessed Sabbath day's labor than to rescue an animal.

Perhaps the fire of modern missionary zeal tends to die out as much because of failure to follow Christ at this point as at any other. It is becoming increasingly evident that men have not taken seriously his teaching of the worth of humanity as humanity in the sight of God. That men who name his name can ever treat their fellows as cogs in a machine, either in industry or in mechanized warfare, is the completest of modern denials of the missionary spirit.

The worth of man to himself: Mark 2:23-28; 8:34-37.

Not only to God but to himself man is of value. With genuine insight Jesus realized that men might reach despair quickly by evaluating themselves too low. He kept the economic figure in pressing home this truth. It was right for his disciples to break the Sabbath law in order to satisfy their hunger, because "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." The institution must serve the needs of the man, for the man is always more important to himself than any institution that has been created for his good. And more directly still, in connection with his teaching on the cross, he makes it clear that it is worth while for a man to take *his* cross, to lose life for *him*, because in so doing man finds his own true life. And what can be worth more to a man than his own life: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Teaching the worth of the lowest: Luke 5:29-32; 7:36-50; 19:10.

It was because of the combination of these two estimates of worth, the value of man to God and the value of man to himself, that Jesus specifically taught what his ministry was constantly illustrating—his concern for the most despised. He could tell the smirking scribes and Pharisees who had gathered at Levi's house that he ate with publicans and sinners just because they

were the sick in spirit and needed the physician's care. They were worth much even in their degraded state. He could turn from his cold and haughty host, Simon the Pharisee, and bestow public attention on the woman of the streets, who had come in to bathe him in costly spice and in tears, because she manifested the fact that she loved as Simon did not. She was actually more than the Pharisee because she loved more. The deepest sin was not adultery, but lovelessness. The very fact that she had to be forgiven and knew it emphasized the need that Christ's concern could meet. In short he had "come to seek and to save that which was lost." The fact that men were obviously lost only rendered both their value and their need the more evident.

Jesus seemed to delight in provoking his contemporaries by disturbing their scale of values for human beings. He found a Roman who had more faith than any well-trained religious leader he had ever met. He acknowledged a Greek woman who had lifted her nobility out of the position of the dogs under the Jews' tables. He pointed out a despised Samaritan who came back to give him thanks when others took his kindness for granted. He told parables to show that there could be a good Samaritan and a humble publican and a wise, even though an unjust, steward. Responsiveness, not race or class or even moral character, was his test. He was ever showing his concern for the unexpected sparks of spirituality in men that gave him kinship to them in reviving the Father's image in their souls.

Jesus' universal kindred: Matt. 12:46-50.

Probably nothing evidences this sense of kinship which Jesus had with men any better than his constant refusal to elevate his family ties. His missionary teaching was at its best when he made a universal out of the conception of the family. His mother and brothers came to rescue him from his entanglements with the religious leaders, but he would not acknowledge their claim as prior to that of humanity: "He stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

MEN'S CONCERN FOR ONE ANOTHER

But Jesus did not leave in the realm of his own attitude the missionary motive of concern for men. He was careful to teach that men manifest the will of God at their best when they too show this spirit of concern.

The true neighbor: Luke 10:25-37.

Of course the classic illustration of this is the parable of the "good Samaritan." It is significant that the lawyer who occasioned this story was quite sure that he understood the matter of loving God with his whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, but he was dubious about his neighbor. Jesus made it forever clear that religion consists, not in the manifestation of leadership in formal abilities at worship or at judgment,

but in timely helpfulness wherever need is found. His parable does not constitute a lovely sentiment but a moral imperative, "Go, and do thou likewise."

The necessity of being a brother: Luke 15:25-32.

Stinging beyond measure is the rebuke to the Pharisees in the famous parable of the father and his two sons. The prodigal who was "lost" was happily found. But the elder son, who stayed home and observed all the conventions, made the greater failure of the two. He shared in none of the father's seeking love for the wayward boy. He was surly and utterly unresponsive to the prodigal's penitence. He had room in his thought only for criticism of the wrong that his brother had done. He would not even recognize him as his brother. Full of eloquence is the contrast in the phrases used by the older son and his father. The one sneeringly says, "This thy son is come." The other gently changes the language, "This thy brother . . . was lost and is found." It is a contrast in attitudes, a fundamental contrast. To be unloving, unmissionary in heart, is to commit the chief of sins.

The universal appeal of a deed of love: Mark 14:3-9.

In the story of Jesus' last week the anointing by Mary of Bethany (not to be confused with Luke's story of the anointing by the sinful woman referred to above) is told in Mark with a touch of the universal. Jesus brushes aside the reference to waste and insists that the quality of Mary's love as evident in her deed to one she cared for is the vital concern that

will influence future thought of the occasion: "Wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

The basis of judgment in kindly deeds: Matt. 25:31-46.

Jesus' well-known parable of the last judgment emphasizes again the quality of concern for others in need as the surest test of likeness to himself. Such a vital matter as the final division of the characters of men into "saved" and "lost" hangs, not on the superior ability of the one group to fathom the mysteries of Jesus' person and express them with fine-spun correctness, but on the readiness of the one to treat the hungry and the sick, the naked and the imprisoned as they would treat him, their king. These are the "righteous" who go "into life eternal."

SENDING OUT MISSIONARIES

It is only in the light of such considerations as those with which we have been dealing that we should stress the few significant passages in the gospels about Jesus' specific charges to his followers to do missionary work. Even then we must realize that Jesus did not approve all the evangelistic zeal of his day. He bitterly condemned his fellow religionists as those who "compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15). Jesus dared to make it clear that evangelism could result in evil as well as good, that the missionary could lower rather than raise

the one he sought, especially if he endeavored simply to make him an adherent of his own system. Such a system might or might not be more appropriate for the "convert" than his own system of religion. It was not a difference in systems that would save; there must be a real difference in faith. In all this Jesus was more honest than some who have led missions through the ages!

The commission of the twelve to mission work: Luke 9:1-6.

Luke gives us in direct and simple form Jesus' charge to his closest followers when he first sent them out to do his work. It was to be a hurried trip; they were to be encumbered with nothing they did not need, and they were to depend on their environment for their care. It was largely a healing ministry on which they were sent.

The trials and rewards of missionaries: Matt. 10:16-42.

In what is perhaps to be viewed as the same setting, the Gospel of Matthew expands the instructions of Jesus to include his teachings on mission work in general. Here we have a veritable manifesto on missionary procedure. Persecution of those who go out in his name is freely predicted with comfort in the assurance that they cannot suffer more than he. Divisions among those who hear them are likewise prophesied, divisions that cut to the quick the tenderest of human affections. The missionary must determine to follow the way of the cross; he must gird himself with faith in God as the

only resource he dares to use. He must expect to be welcomed only by the prophetic type of people who truly look to a better day of righteousness.

The "Great Commission": Matt. 28:16-20; cf. Luke 24:45-49.

Overused as these final words of Jesus to his followers have been, they remain his most compact charge. However the church that gave rise to Matthew's Gospel may have thrown their thought into formal language, they are true to the spirit of the Jesus of the Gospels. The ground of missionary effort is the power of Christ. The stress of missionary activity is teaching (the word is used twice in this tiny passage). Luke calls it "witnessing"—testifying to that which one has seen with his own eyes. The scope of missionary effort is "all nations." The enabling act of missionary continuance is the abiding presence of the spirit of Christ himself: "Lo, I am with you always."

The prayer for the oneness of all believers: John 17: 20-23.

Not so often referred to in this connection, but probably deserving to stand even above the "Great Commission" as a missionary charge is Jesus' pastoral prayer in John 17. With unerring insight he sees that all the efforts to win men to him must fail if his followers are divided. He prays earnestly that they may be one, not alone for their own peace, but "that the world may know that thou didst send me." The greatest missionary power that Christ's followers can wield is the testimony of their unity!

CHAPTER 8

The Missionary Strategy of the Book of Acts

THE book of Acts is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke. It opens with the scene of Jesus' farewell commission to his disciples, the famous appointment to be his witnesses in the fourfold realm of "Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:6-8). It is significant that Luke organizes his history of the early church according to this plan of geographical expansion, chapters 2 to 7 describing the ministry in Jerusalem, 8 to 12 the overflow into Judaea and Samaria, and 13 to 28 following the apostles to the uttermost part of the earth.

The book is, of course, one continuous development of the mission of the early church. To do justice to the fundamentals of missions in the New Testament one needs to study the entire book carefully with an eye to its unfolding movement. Nevertheless there are certain principles on which the early Christians acted that are relatively few in number and that are repeatedly illustrated in varying settings throughout rapidly shifting scenes. We may call them the principles of

strategy by which the Christian church came to occupy so much of the world for Christ before the end of the first century.

THE IMPETUS OF AN INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP

One of the most clearly marked characteristics of the discipleship of the book of Acts is *togetherness*. It would seem as though this story takes up where the intercessory prayer of Jesus leaves off and emphasizes that the early Christians won men to their Lord by being one in their spirit and action. The length to which they went to insure this unity and to guard it against break furnishes us with a very definite clue to the success of their missionary efforts.

At Pentecost: 2:1-4.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place," or, as it may be rendered, "intent upon one thing." Such is the significant opening of the story of their public life. No wonder the "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" is said to have filled all the house! No wonder the tongues of fire sat on *each* of them and they were *all* filled with the Spirit!

In communal life: 2:42-47; 4:32-37.

The unity of worship of the early Christians was not confined to a festal occasion. The book of Acts is careful to emphasize that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking

of bread, and in prayers." When men pray together and eat together and learn together they are apt to work successfully together toward a common end.

If the tale stopped there it would seem to describe only a first-rate church. But many modern Christians are bothered not a little by the gusto with which the author of Acts in both these passages describes the economic communism of the early church. They "had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. . . . Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them . . . and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." It is often pointed out that such an arrangement was possible only among a relatively small company, that it continued even there for only a short period, and that its spirit was broken from within the company itself. These facts are all pertinent; nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the early Christians went out of their way to see to it that no one of their number lacked for anything, and that they thought of God as punishing with death those of their number who broke the unified spirit with lying selfishness. Much of the ease with which their early evangelism spread unquestioningly among the people was evidently due to this accepted commonality of life. It may well be noted that the rulers who tried to find occasion for holding the zealous apostles in arrest were forced by

popular demand to keep releasing them until after this spirit had broken.

The prayer meeting for Peter: 12:12-17.

One of the loveliest episodes in this rather stern narrative is that of the days after the apostles were subject to frequent arrest. "Many were gathered together praying" for Peter who was in prison. He is released and comes to knock at their door. The girl who answers the summons cannot believe her eyes. Continued knocking brings the whole group to the door to hear the glory tale of the effectiveness of their united petition.

The fellowship at Antioch: 14:25-28.

Apparently the author of Acts means to paint as a typical picture the scene at Antioch when Barnabas and Paul returned from the evangelistic tour on which the church had sent them. These supporters of Christianity's first foreign mission listened eagerly to the report of their emissaries as to those who were doing their own work.

All the way through the book of Acts the essential oneness of the disciples in their faith and work is attested, not alone by such illustrations of its reality, but also by the zeal with which pretense to such unity was punished as soon as the hypocrisy was made clear. Ananias and his wife Sapphira breaking the early common way (5:1-11), Simon the sorcerer professing belief in Christ yet trying to buy the power to bestow the Holy Spirit as some new magic (8:9-24), the pre-

tending Christians at Ephesus who sought to "call the name of Jesus" over evil spirits (19:13-20) all suffered immediately in body and spirit for their tampering with the unity of pure hearts.

GLORIFYING JESUS BY WORD AND DEED

This oneness of faith and life among the early believers manifested itself especially in the fact that the centrality of all their hope was in Christ. Their strategy was not to hide the name of the Captain of their salvation until some more appropriate time, but boldly, from the first and on every occasion, to let it be known that all they did and all they were was because of what Jesus was to them.

Early preaching: 2:22-42.

Examination of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost reveals how early this emphasis was laid. The apostle's whole concern is to show that the strange phenomena which the crowd has witnessed are due to the power that comes from the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He constantly relates Jesus to David, as the fulfiller of a greater kingship and a richer heritage. He connects the death of Christ with the eternal will of God, and his point of evangelization is that these very worshippers from many lands share in the guilt of putting Christ to death, a guilt that can be removed only by their repentance and their turning to him.

Early trials: 3:13-4:2; 4:8-13.

The earliest trials of the apostles resulted from their preaching in the streets of Jerusalem in the name of that Jesus whom the rulers thought they had put out of the way some years before. When Peter had healed the lame man in the very public spot of a temple gate, he had courageously proclaimed, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (3:6). He went on to declare to the crowd that this cure was a glorification of Jesus. Without any sense of tact or use of diplomacy the ardent apostle pitched into the people, declaring that they had been responsible who had "killed the Prince of life." He placed Jesus in the prophetic succession to Moses and Samuel. When the Sadducees caused Peter's and John's arrest because they were preaching Jesus' resurrection, Peter stigmatized the rulers quite directly for crucifying Jesus, declaring him to be "the head of the corner" and absolutely unique: "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye must be saved."

The church's prayer: 4:23-31.

In this passage we have the preservation of what is probably the earliest written prayer of the church. It is a rather formal ascription of praise to the God who has rescued the apostles from danger. The faithful are represented as crowding every sentence with references to Jesus. They quote the Psalms of David and apply them to Jesus; they cite instances of God's pre-

serving care of Jesus during his earthly life; they proudly acknowledge themselves as his followers. And the author says that when they had finished with such a prayer, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Before the council: 5:25-32.

This same boldness stood the apostles in stead when they were again arrested, being brought before the council. The whole complaint of that body was that they had continued to teach "in this name" (sufficient designation!). Peter reiterated his stand, again accusing the leaders of responsibility for Jesus' death and declaring the apostles his witnesses, emphasizing his renewed stand by the assertion, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Stephen's dying words: 7:55-60.

When Stephen the deacon had been arrested for his ardent proclamation of his faith he entered on a long harangue in which he recounted well-known Hebrew history. But when he was called upon to undergo martyrdom for the cause, his final words were about Jesus: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. . . . And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The author would ascribe to this centrality of Stephen's life the appearance of "his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Individual preaching outside Jerusalem: 8:35; 9:20-30; 10:36-43.

When the leaders were scattered from Jerusalem because of the persecution that arose after the stoning of Stephen it might be supposed that they had learned their lesson and would trim their sails. If they could not gain a permanent foothold in their natural habitat by their emphasis on Jesus, what could they hope to do with such a gospel where he had not been known? But instead, the book of Acts emphasizes the same sort of preaching in the new surroundings. These early efforts were largely individual. Philip, catching up with the Ethiopian, "preached unto him Jesus" by beginning at the scripture where the Ethiopian was reading. Saul of Tarsus, converted from a persecutor to a defender of the faith, "straightway preached Christ in the synagogues," and was presented at Jerusalem by Barnabas as one who "had seen the Lord in the way," and there "he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus." Peter also, preaching to the group in the home of Cornelius the Roman centurion, did not emphasize his Jewish training in the things of religion, but spoke "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ," and he further held up before them Jesus "who went about doing good . . . for God was with him," climaxing his argument by attesting the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

Early mission tours: 13:23-37; 16:31, 32; 17:1-3; 18:24-28.

On his early missionary tours, in which Paul generally travelled with companions, the preaching centered in Jesus. In a rather lengthy discourse at Pisidian Antioch, Paul followed the example of Peter's Pentecostal sermon in tracing the spiritual descent of Jesus from David, proclaiming his resurrection as the point of his superiority to David who "saw corruption." In the case of the frightened Philippian jailor Paul responded to the man's appeal for help by preaching Jesus to him. In answer to the terror of a Roman military man caught in the failure to perform his duty and shrieking, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did not hesitate to proclaim, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Obviously Paul was thinking of a more far-reaching salvation than escape from the consequences of oversight; he had a type of salvation which he could preach to the man's household as well as to his own tortured spirit. At Thessalonica, in a more formal setting, Paul reasoned with the synagogue audience of Jews, directly setting forth Jesus as the Messiah their prophets had expected.

Of special interest in the account of these early preaching tours is the work of Apollos at Ephesus. He began with the limited knowledge of "the baptism of John," but, being privately instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, he at once joined the ranks of those who proclaimed Jesus, and by his eloquence "he mightily convinced the Jews."

Paul's later preaching: 24:24; 26:6-23; 28:23, 24.

As though to emphasize the fact that the herald of these early missions never recanted under fire, the author of the Acts emphasizes in connection with Paul's public trials that he still preached Jesus. He had already declared to the mob in Jerusalem the resurrection belief by which he lived, when Felix came "and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." In his long and eloquent defense before Agrippa Paul recounted his experience on the Damascus road, agreeing with the narrative account in the ninth chapter that this was a firsthand experience with the risen Lord as God's Christ. With the simple awe of one who has never doubted the validity of a strange unearthly hour, Paul tells his story, unashamedly making it the basis of his evangelistic ministry. Likewise, after Paul had appealed his personal case to Caesar and had reached the capital city of his dreams, he carried out the same procedure with those who visited him in his lodging, "persuading them concerning Jesus . . . from morning till evening." Thus the book of Acts represents all the apostles preaching a Christo-centric evangel as the ground of their mission activity in all parts of the Roman empire.

THE COMBINATION OF HEALING WITH EVANGELISM

All too often modern evangelism has been thought of as dealing only with "the soul." Indeed, it is sometimes set over against any other dealing with men, as though a piece of a man, called his soul, were lifted

out of him and abstractly dealt with. No phrase quite so misleading as that of "saving souls"! The New Testament is more realistic. It is always insisting that God is for the body as well as for the soul. Its very doctrine of the resurrection of the body is powerful testimony to the fact that the gospel was from the first thought of as being for the redemption of the whole man; it thought of man's person as a unit.

The strong emphasis, both of the gospels and of the book of Acts, on the healing of men's bodies should have led us to keep this fact better to the fore than we have done. And especially the repeated connections in the book of Acts between evangelistic tours and prompt ministering to physical needs give wholesome balance to New Testament missions.

The healing ministry of Peter: 3:1-10; 9:32-42.

Peter secured his first public hearing for the gospel in the streets of Jerusalem through his healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. Now there is no evidence that Peter healed the cripple in order to get a chance to preach Christ before a gaping throng. Rather the telling of the story suggests the sympathy of Peter and John with one who had had to be carried about ever since his birth. They do not have the silver he expects, but they are delighted that they have a power greater than it represents. It is rather the overjoyed man clinging to Peter and John with ecstasy that draws the crowd and suggests to Peter his evangelistic opportunity: "When Peter saw it, he answered unto the people——."

Peter's mighty healings of the ninth chapter are likewise related as part of his missionary work. At Lydda the palsied Aeneas is told, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." And when the inhabitants of the region saw the cure, there is no record that they magnified Peter, but it is definitely stated that they "turned to the Lord." At Joppa the plaintive concern of the widows over the sickness and death of the generous Dorcas (had she worked herself to death for their belated gratitude?) sets the stage for another example of the same procedure. Peter puts all the widows out with all the coats of Dorcas' making that they were showing him, and brings Dorcas back to life. The opportunity he made of this is put succinctly enough: "And many believed in the Lord."

The care of Saul of Tarsus: 9:10-19.

The same combination of concern for the physical and the spiritual is evident in the gracious story of Ananias who drew the dangerous assignment of taking in the fire-eating Saul of Tarsus after his transforming experience outside Damascus. After Ananias is persuaded that he can treat Paul as exactly the opposite to the man of whom he had heard, he exhibits full Christian art in preaching to him at the same time that he announces the cure of his malady: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

Paul's healings of others: 14:8-18; 16:16-18.

Paul also united preaching with healing on occasion. When he had brought power to walk to the cripple of Lystra, he and Barnabas were taken for gods. Apparently Paul had been deeply touched by the lame man's condition and had singled him out spontaneously. But now that the multitude are magnifying the marvelous work, he and his companion turn the incident into a proclaiming of the power of Christ. At Philippi Paul commanded an evil spirit to come out of a much abused girl "in the name of Jesus Christ."

REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE RACE DISTINCTIONS

Another of the obvious missionary strategies of the book of Acts is the steadfastness and unanimity with which the apostles refused to recognize racial barriers in building the Christian church. This was a major achievement indeed for men trained in the narrowness of scribal Judaism; yet, although other portions of the New Testament picture some natural shortcomings on the part of one or two of the apostles at this point, the story of the general agreement of all Christian leaders seems to be as Acts tells it. The book is filled with telling illustrations.

The many nations at Pentecost: 2:5-11.

Although the audience to which Peter preached at Pentecost was undoubtedly composed of proselytes

to the Jewish faith, the author of Acts takes delight in detailing the various countries and races from which they came; they were "out of every nation under heaven." The ecumenical nature of Christianity laid hold early on its devotees.

Heeding the Grecian widows: 6:1-7.

We are shocked to learn that the Grecian widows soon lodged a complaint that they were being neglected for the more favored Hebrews "in the daily ministration." Sharing in support has ever been a fruitful source of jealousy. But be it noted to the apostles' credit that they did not for a moment side-step the issue; they considered the matter of enough importance to appoint an entire new order of deacons to see that equal distributions were made. And the names of the seven deacons who were appointed are all Greek!

The ministry to the Roman Cornelius: 10:1-11:18.

Brilliant beyond compare and full of significant judgments is the description of the test case of Cornelius. The admission that a pagan could pray acceptably to God out of his own devoutness was a large concession to start with. His direction to a Christian Jew was the beginning of hope. The breakdown of Peter's prejudice is told in the memorable style of a typical Old Testament vision; the clean and unclean meats let down in the sheet from heaven are not distinguished by the Lord. Peter's hesitancy to go with the messengers of Cornelius, his half-wondering listening to

the strange tale of the religious connections between himself and this foreigner, his gingerly stepping among the many who had come into the Roman's house—all these natural scenes are climaxed by Peter's honest and simple-hearted acknowledgment of the undeniable facts: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In this confession Christian breadth came to birth. After this the preaching of Christ, the falling of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles present, the baptism, and the dwelling together follow as a matter of course. The lovely sequel of Peter's recital of the events to the council at Jerusalem issues in their glorifying of God because he had "also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Turning to the Gentiles en masse: 13:44-48; 15:1-21.

Such occasional ministries to an individual Gentile and his friends might conceivably have continued without the Christian church going all-out for Gentile missions. But at Pisidian Antioch on his very first mission tour, Paul definitely announced his turning from Jews to Gentiles, and quoted in support of his action from one of the servant passages of Isaiah that we have already seen predicted a universal ministry. Here it was that foreign missions really began. Later a second Jerusalem conference calmly considered what was to be done about the spreading gospel and endorsed the recognition of Gentile faith as being on the same par with Jewish faith, simply urging the Gen-

tiles to abstain from certain practices hateful to the Jews. The eagerness of Paul and Barnabas in describing their wide mission led to a truly liberal declaration. "We believe," read the pronouncement of the conference, "that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Another frontier post of the ecumenical spirit had been gained with the recognition of a common human need.

Jew-Gentile mixtures in the church: 16:1-3; 18:1-4.

Even the mixture of Jews and Gentiles in the Christian church soon became an order of the day. At Lys-
tra it existed in Timothy's own family, and at Corinth it was the expected setting for Paul's preaching for many Sabbath days.

The meeting of prejudice: 21:17-26; 22:21, 22.

It was inevitable that such heroic actions on the part of the early church should not go unquestioned. Paul had tried to avoid as much prejudice as possible by having the Jew-Gentile Timothy undergo the rites of the Jewish law (16:3). He met the misrepresentation in Jerusalem that he was teaching Jews to forsake their own law by joining himself with some of his fellow countrymen who were under a vow and fulfilling with them a Jewish ritual. Thus he tried to please wherever pleasing was possible. But he finally had to suffer for his breadth of spirit anyway. It is disappointingly clear that the mob in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's last visit heard his defense of his gospel quietly until he recounted God's appointment of him

to go "far hence unto the Gentiles." "And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth." So has the spirit that transcends the racial barrier always had to suffer for its faith! But the early church was willing.

TAKING PERSECUTION JOYFULLY

This leads to the realization that another among the major strategies of the first century mission was the decision of the apostles and many others simply to accept whatever trials and persecutions came and rejoice in them as in any other part of their service for the Lord. This attitude obviated all those devious plannings and questionable compromises that so often cloud the testimony of less ready souls.

Suffering at the hand of the Jewish council: 4:18-20; 5:41; 7:54-60.

When Peter and John were hailed before the council of the Jews for their preaching and were offered liberty if they would refrain from mentioning Jesus, they at once responded with clear-cut decision, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Later, "they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Stephen, at his stoning, expressed no recriminations, but rather, in the spirit of Jesus himself, prayed that God would "lay not this sin to their charge," and died, "calling upon God."

Suffering at the hand of Herod: 12:1-11.

The activity of Herod against James and Peter is marked by no other spirit on the part of the church than prayer for the deliverance of their leaders—a prayer granted in the case of Peter in such a remarkable way as to mystify even that doughty apostle himself.

Paul's sufferings: 14:19-22; 16:19-40; 20:17-25; 21:13, 14.

According to the book of Acts the sufferings of Paul were endured in a calm and ready manner, with definite acceptance of them as part of his life's opportunity. When he was stoned at Lystra and left for dead, he got up and went about his preaching as before. At Philippi he and Silas not only prayed but sang in their jail, and after the miraculous delivery Paul sought to protect the reputation of the jailor and assured him he need not take his life in despair. He could bravely tell the Ephesian elders who came down to Miletus to meet him that they would see his face no more, yet he could also say, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." When friends at Caesarea made a last desperate attempt to dissuade him from going into the net at Jerusalem, he replied, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

FOLLOWING THE DIRECTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

All that we have said about the missionary strategy of the early apostles is understandable in the light of the most important single fact which this book of their labors has to record: they were constantly guided, nay, specifically directed in what they did, by the indwelling, living Spirit. Their certainty at this point is too evenly sustained to be attributed to an ecstasy. They are too filled with the sense of the abiding presence of God in Jesus Christ to attribute their experience to an impersonal force. The reality of the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit. It has been justly called, not the Acts of the Apostles, but the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

As far as this phenomenon affects direct mission activity, the guidance of the Spirit is to be noted in such instances as these:

Power to occupy given areas: 1:1-8; 2:1-4.

The book of Acts begins significantly in the closing scene between the Jesus of the earthly life and the apostles. Very carefully the author connects the resurrected Christ with the gift of the Spirit. He it is who tells his followers they must attempt no mission work until the Spirit has come upon them with power; but that when this gift is theirs, then they shall be his witnesses in an ever widening circle, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Pentecostal scene is

likewise grounded in a fresh outpouring of the Spirit on the assembled group.

Early missionaries sent out: 8:26-40; 13:1-4.

Philip is notable among the apostles as one who went rapidly from place to place. But his changes in location are said to be Spirit-directed. After he had preached in Samaria, "the angel of the Lord" bade him go afar to Gaza. The Spirit commanded him to go near the chariot of the Ethiopian and, after he had there fulfilled his mission, "caught him away, that the eunuch saw him no more." It was to the Antioch church, ministering and fasting with their splendid leaders, that "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It is repeatedly noted that the apostles were "full of the Holy Ghost."

The Spirit directs Paul in crises: 16:6-10; 27:22-26.

Perhaps the best known example in the book of Acts of the Spirit's direction is the case of Paul's attempt to get into Bithynia. Here the rule worked in the negative, the Spirit prohibiting Paul's entry. The ultimate purpose was positive, however, Paul being led to the seacoast and over into Macedonia.

Another of Paul's critical positions in which the direction of God is reported to have been immediate was his storm-tossed voyage to Rome. Here, when all seemed lost, the fact that "an angel of God" stood by him in the night and assured him that none of those on board would be lost nerved Paul with courage

equal to the occasion. Apostolic confidence was verily Spirit-fed!

As a rule people of today look on these experiences as out of the ordinary and feel that there is nothing in contemporary life that corresponds with them. But surely it is somewhere near the truth to recognize that men and women who live close to God in all ages feel the presence of the Spirit in their lives a personal reality, and through some sort of means, that may differ with individuals and with times, come to a sense of certainty of the will of God for them and find their peace in doing it. Such souls are not the walled-in kind of mystics, but those of far-reaching faith whose missionary zeal is at once a passion and a blessing.

CHAPTER 9

Manifestoes of a World-Wide Church: The Epistles of Paul

THAT Paul was a Christian with a world-wide point of view is generally recognized. Even though he clung to his scribal training in some of his use of argument, such narrowness as he possessed was formal rather than expressive of the real man. The gospel of Christ had liberated his spirit. The change which conversion had effected in him was deep and fundamental. It meant the undoing of all merely natural affections and ingrained prejudices. It enabled him actually to become "all things to all men, that he might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22).

In looking for the notes of a universal faith in Paul one is impressed with the similarity of some of them to those in the book of Acts and even to some in the gospels. Paul's unique contribution to Christian thought has been so often stressed that we are in danger of passing by the equally obvious fact that Christian tradition was, after all, one great stream. Both the likenesses of Paul's world vision to the gospels and the Acts and his different approaches from theirs are evident in the arranging of his main points. It must

be kept in mind that those main points are not outlined by Paul in any systematic fashion. They come out incidentally in the writing of his letters to his beloved churches. Like the prophets, Paul had the immediate occasion always in mind. He was a man of affairs, alert to every need of small, new Christian communities. It is in connection with actual problems which he meets in these communities that he blazes the trails of his thought.

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Nothing is more necessary to an understanding of Paul than keeping in mind the completeness with which everything in life for him was wrapped up in the person of Jesus Christ. "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21) is his most thoroughly characteristic saying. It is not simply that his theology is Christological, but that the meaning of the universe, of life, and of his own self is expressed entirely in what Christ is. If you could have taken from Paul his faith in, and personal relation to, Christ, he would have literally dropped dead. All avenues of his being are affected by the constant thought of being "in Christ," and his missionary zeal centers there.

The head of the universe: Col. 1:15-17.

There is not much of the cosmological in Paul. He is concerned, not with abstractions, but with concrete situations, with people, not with worlds. Yet in his letter to the Colossians, where he is dealing with the Gnostic belief that the world is evil and was made

by an evil power, he pictures in a few trenchant phrases Christ as the creator of the world and as eternally living before the world was brought into being. Thus he joins himself with the prologue to John's gospel in appealing to men everywhere to think of the created world as good because it was made by the same One who became its redeemer from the evil that had fallen upon it.

The sum of God's revelation: Gal. 4:3-5; Eph. 1:10.

In order that men might not be "in bondage under the elements of the world," God sent Jesus Christ, his Son, to reveal to that world and to all men in it his own nature. It was not until "the fulness of times" that God sent him, but then it was that "he might gather together in one all things in Christ." This summing up of all God's self-revealing nature in the person of the One revealer is to Paul the ground of men's hope. Men do not have to go hunting through the world for this or that partial revelation of God; they see God once for all completely in One who is understandable by them all.

The self-humbling One who is exalted: Phil. 2:5-11.

An excellent illustration of the way in which Paul's most far-reaching thought comes to light incidentally to some pressing need is seen in the well-known second chapter of Philippians. The apostle is striving to find a pattern for the humility he desires his readers to maintain. True to his best instincts, he turns to Christ, and finds him the most humble of all. His humility

was chosen of free will. It was adopted in spite of the wonderful fact that from all eternity he had been co-equal with God the Father. It was his attitude of service to humanity, and it has resulted in an exaltation to Saviorhood, an even greater height than he enjoyed at the first. Thus in answer to the immediate need Paul develops one of his finest missionary appeals, "Wherefore (that is, because of his obedient humility) God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Paul bases his wide appeal on the ground that Christ is destined to be exalted in the whole world by God.

THE WORK OF CHRIST IS ALL-INCLUSIVE

This headship of Christ is no mere generalization for Paul; it is to be seen in specific relationships that have their ramifications in all the world.

The new human race: Rom. 5:12-21; cf. II Cor. 5:14-18.

One of Paul's keenest insights is the realism with which he views humanity as a unit. All are one under sin. The descendants of Adam are alike guilty and judged. Men are all one group in their giving of offense; the differences between them are superficial. But under the grace of Christ's redemption there is formed a new humanity, knit together with a bond

even stronger than the bond of sin that unites the race of Adam. That there can be a race of Christ, without regard to previous privilege, is a definite missionary foundation to Paul's thought: "For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

His resurrection makes life possible for all: I Cor. 15: 20-22.

This same idea of the two races is even more tellingly used, from a missionary standpoint, when Paul combines it with his favorite theme of the resurrection. There is a new race bound together by the resurrection of Christ its founder as strongly as the old was bound together by the sin and death of its founder: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The reconciler of the world: II Cor. 5:18-20.

In his use of his oft-repeated idea of God being "in Christ" Paul also strikes the missionary note of universality. It might be thought that surely here he would keep close to a mood of rejoicing in his special privilege of knowing God. But Paul cannot relish a blessing without desiring the whole world to have it. And so he is glad to make plain that God was in Christ "reconciling *the world* unto himself." He even connects his own evangelistic zeal with this high belief: "Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead,

be ye reconciled to God." This thought of Paul, that he is working instead of Christ in the world, comes very near to explaining his complexity by simplicity.

Peace with God possible to all men: Col. 1:19-23; I Tim. 2:5.

This same idea is expressed in a little different language in one of Paul's great passages about his mission to the Gentiles. By the blood of Christ's cross it has been possible for God to make peace with all men and "by him to reconcile all things unto himself." Just as there is one God, so there is one and only one mediator between God and men.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS: THE INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES

It was inevitable that one who believed in the headship of Christ over all the world and who believed that the saving work of Christ was all inclusive should proclaim a gospel that would break down all barriers of every kind of pride and become universal. Frequently Paul thought of that gospel as proceeding from the more privileged to the less privileged, but he thought of the progress as bound to come.

The gospel God's power for all: Rom. 1:16, 17.

The most original and daring contribution of Paul's genius was his turning a sense of shame into a sense of glory. The cross was of course a stigma, the ancient equivalent of the electric chair. As such even the

apostles of the early pages of the book of Acts seem to have viewed it. Certainly they went out of their way to fix the blame for it. But Paul is little concerned with the question of what men were to blame for the death of Christ, because he thinks of that death as the absolute essential of the salvation of men, and of the cross as changed into the Christian's greatest glory. The gospel of this cross is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

No artificial distinctions with God: Rom. 2:10, 11; 10:11-13.

Both the guilt for which men suffer and the opportunity to be saved Paul views as leaving no room for special privilege. "There is no respect of persons with God." "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." It is always Paul's position that whatever special privilege there has been is an historical function and not an essential condition. As a result he can think of God as moving through these differences between races which have marked various eras and using them to make one great race: "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also" (Rom. 3:29).

Christ cures the foolishness of all races: I Cor. 1:20-25.

Again Paul's centering of everything in Christ comes into the picture. The actual breaking down of barriers which have existed in given historical situa-

tions proves that there never has been an inherent worth of any one race over any other. This makes it necessary for every race to get over its own particular foolishness. The Greeks have been ridiculously proud of their "wisdom," the Jews of their ability to interpret "signs." As a result of this pride, the Jews stumbled over the most obvious sign, the cross, and the Greeks counted it foolish instead of themselves. But those of both races who see in the cross God's power and his wisdom are transformed by it to the dropping of their own foolishness.

All differences between men are abrogated in Christ:
Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:11.

Paul revels in the destruction of these very barriers that men have been at such pains to erect. He sees that Christ has made inevitable their destruction because they are unreal. Not only racial, but social differences ("bond and free"), cultural extremes ("Barbarian, Scythian"), and sex distinctions ("male and female") are done away in Christ. No longer is it possible for the religious privilege of the Jew to let him lord it over the Gentile; in Christ he becomes the kind of man that cannot lord. No longer may the curling lip of the intellectual sneer at the duller minds about him; in Christ his mind is given over. No longer may a slave owner drive his slave; he himself is under the compulsion of a greater Master. No more may man dominate woman; they are restored in Christ to their intended place as the two agents in the making of the world's

families. It is important to note that in none of these transformations does Paul think of Christ as changing the world order and doing something new. Rather he thinks of him as bringing to actuality what has always been the natural state. It has been only the sin of the world that has led cultural or racial or social or sex differences to separate people; Christ brings them together.

The great peace between races: Eph. 2:11-19.

So it is that, especially in relation to the disturbing race problem, Paul can foresee in place of the bitter enmity a great peace, made possible by the unifying power of Christ. It is true that the Gentiles have been called "uncircumcision" by the Jews and that they must remember they really were "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But the Jews must also remember that these same Gentiles have now been "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Blood will tell, and this blood makes for a very close relationship. Now no close relationship is pleasant unless all bickering is done away. So Paul is careful to make it clear that "he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." There is no final way in which two races can be at peace with one another as long as they are two; they must become one to be in harmony. "One new man," that is, one new humanity, is Paul's belief. This cuts once for all the age-old tension.

The Gentiles have inherited Jewish blessings: Gal. 3: 13, 14; Eph. 3:1-7.

Skillfully Paul shows that the Jews do not have to do away with their ancient blessings by being made one with the Gentiles. Rather, the Gentiles now inherit these blessings with them: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." For Paul this is the fulfillment of God's word to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). He now can call the Gentiles "fellow heirs . . . partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel."

Paul's call was to Gentile evangelization: Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:15-17; Eph. 3:8, 9; Col. 1:27; I Tim. 2:7.

It becomes easy to see at this point how Paul, with all false pride taken away, can publicly proclaim that he, a Jew, was especially appointed by Christ a minister to the Gentiles. He thinks of it not even as a "foreign mission," for in Christ there are no longer any foreigners. Repeatedly does he dwell upon this call, not at all abashed, but rather lifted up by its significance. He says, "As I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." He represents the sphere of his call to have been determined at the very time of his conversion: "When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." He counts it a high appointment of which he is unworthy: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among

the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He is "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." Paul glories in his own despised sphere of labor just as he glories in the despised cross of Christ.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ECUMENICAL LIVING

It is fair to ask the question, Did Paul in his own life exemplify these high principles of inherent racial equality? Did he preach to Gentiles in a condescending way as missionaries have sometimes preached to "the heathen," or did he labor with them as a brother to bring to full growth the life of the gospel? His letters are full of incidents of ecumenical living as well as of the preaching of its principles.

Standing for Gentile liberty: Gal. 2:1-5.

One of the tightest places in which a man can get, racially speaking, is a fellowship group of members of one race into which he has brought a friend of another race. Paul was in this predicament when he took the Greek Titus with him to a conference of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. Immediately there was the cry among some of the "false brethren . . . who came in privily to spy out our liberty" that Titus should be circumcised; he must go through the rites of Jewish initiation if he would fellowship with Jews. But Paul stood his ground, which was that Christian fellowship superseded racial fellowship. He would not remove Titus from the group, neither would he allow him to undergo the Jewish ceremonies. In Christ Titus was just as good as anyone else.

Resisting Peter's narrowness: Gal. 2:11-14.

When you add to the difficulties of a fellowship scene those of a common meal, you have a real racial problem. The situation at Antioch was as interesting as it was novel. Here both Jews and Gentiles mingled freely in the Christian church. Barnabas and Paul encouraged this token of the triumph of their world-view. Peter, too, when he came down to Antioch to see how things were going, fell in with the spirit of the group and ate at the same communion table with Gentiles. But when emissaries came down from James, the leader of the Christian church at Jerusalem, Peter became wary of his reputation among his Jewish brethren and led in the establishment of a separate communion table for Jewish Christians. Before we condemn him too easily, we must remember that it was just as hard in Peter's day for a Jew to eat with a Gentile as it is today in many parts of our country for a white to eat with a black. But Paul did not allow the change of face to pass unnoticed. He challenged Peter's inconsistency in open meeting: "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." He challenged it on the basis of Peter having acknowledged that he needed Christ as well as any Gentile. Possibly Paul was referring to Peter's own broad-minded action with regard to Cornelius. It seems strange that Peter should have acted in such a way at Antioch after so noble a display of grace as he made at Caesarea. But Peter was more noted for following his fears than for being consistent.

Fellowshipping with personal enemies: Phil. 1:12-20.

Paul's practicing of the principles of a world faith broke other barriers than those of race. While he was a prisoner, probably at Rome, some other Christians took advantage of the situation to conduct some speedy evangelization that they might get credit for making converts while Paul's hands were tied. Strange conduct indeed, and such as we might expect to draw Paul's fire. But on the contrary Paul passed over the personal abuse, and even relegated to a place of lesser importance the low motive, while he found the common point of fellowship between him and these personal foes: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife . . . supposing to add affliction to my bonds. . . . Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." To be able to feel and act like that is to plumb the very depths of Christian fellowship and break down the last barrier to the ecumenical spirit. This is the missionary spirit complete.

Championing the cause of the underling: Philemon.

In the social situation, too, Paul showed himself capable of acting on his principles at any risk of their costliness. Philemon was a wealthy Colossian Christian leader. In keeping with the customs of the day, he had his slaves. One of them, Onesimus, ran away after having robbed his master. Paul met Onesimus and was the means of leading him to Christ. Moreover Paul

became personally attached to Onesimus, both for his own sake and also because he was a reminder to him of his Colossian friends. Now arose a delicate situation. Should Paul keep Onesimus with him, as he desired to do, or should he return him to his master? True to his principles of never breaking up by revolutionary methods the customs of the day, however he felt about them, Paul returned Onesimus. But at the same time he wrote a lovely note to Philemon, not only assuring him of Onesimus' changed character, not only assuming the debt of the robbery, but challenging his friend to a new relation with the slave as "a brother beloved." Paul's graciousness is at its best when he assures Philemon, "Without thy mind would I do nothing." But when he concludes, "Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say," then, as Lightfoot has put it, "the word 'emancipation' trembles on his lips."

THE PREACHING OF FAITH

In making faith the one requirement for Christian discipleship Paul also established his missionary zeal on a plane above prejudice. We have already seen how this worked in the case of the acceptance of Gentile Christians to the fellowship with the Jewish Christians. Their common faith made them one. Paul makes one of his chief teachings his conception of faith as the element in religion which unites the righteous of all times and places into one family.

Faith binds where law divides: Rom. 3:21-26.

The classic statement of this principle is in Paul's treatment of sin and righteousness in his Epistle to the Romans. He agrees with the Jewish legalists that it is the righteousness of God which must rest on all men if they are to be one with him. But he insists, as they would deny, that it is "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."

Justification is by faith: Rom. 4; Gal. 2:19-3:9.

Still a Jewish lawyer in many ways, Paul seeks to find legal grounds for justifying sinful man before his maker. He finds that there is only one ground that can justify Gentile or Jew, low or high, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, and it is the same ground on which Abraham the father of the Jews was justified—faith, in the sense of an abandonment of self to trust in God. Now instead of this leading Paul to argue that all men should therefore become Jews and so get into Abraham's line, it rather inspires him to declare, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Faith may be a family heritage: II Tim. 1:3-6.

Paul recognizes that this family nature of faith greatly increases its power when it is nurtured in a true home situation. Unlike Jacob's faith, which was not firsthand because it had not been nurtured in his

divided home, Paul rejoices in Timothy's "unfeigned faith . . . which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

THE PREACHING OF A UNIVERSAL ETHIC

Not only in the fact that Paul sees faith as the one need of the human will, but also in that he preaches just one kind of morals for all kinds of men, do we find the missionary thrust of his gospel. Jesus had proclaimed the principle of a universal ethic when he said to his disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Paul worked that out at some length.

As a life of faith: Rom. 16:25-27; Gal. 5:16-6:10.

Faith, with Paul, was not a creed but a life. He summarizes the five rather detailed chapters of particular ethical duties with which the Epistle to the Romans closes by speaking of "the obedience of faith." The closing section of his Epistle to the Galatians contains his finest section on moral living. Love, joy, peace, and other graces are for every man the fruit of the Spirit living within him; they are not the works of any law. A man must simply "walk in the Spirit" if he would not "fulfill the lust of the flesh." There is no other way to keep from being "weary in well doing." And God cannot be mocked; any man reaps as he sows, of the Spirit or of the flesh.

As a resurrected life: Rom. 6:1-14.

In another great passage Paul grounds the Christian ethic in union with Christ in his experiences of death and resurrection. The man who has turned to Christ has died with him to sin; he has risen with him that he should "walk in newness of life." It is for this reason that "we should not serve sin." This is the sole ground and dynamic for such exhortations as, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body," "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead," "Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness."

As the right use of Spiritual gifts: Rom. 12; I Cor. 12:1-14:19.

Another of Paul's expressions for a universal ethic is the reality of the Holy Spirit present in each life—a conviction as vivid as that of the apostles in the book of Acts. We have "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." We may use all as "every one members one of another" if we "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service" (R.V.). The long passage cited in I Corinthians contains the famous thirteenth chapter on the eternity of love. But this is not a merely poetic eulogy of some beautiful grace; it is the practical recognition that the use of all spiritual gifts, even of the showy "gift of tongues," may be sanctified to the building up of humanity only by the activities of the

Spirit being channeled through a heart of loving, self-forgetting affection.

As seen clearest in family relationships: Eph. 4:17-5:14; Col. 3:5-17.

It is significant that in two of Paul's letters he gives extended treatment to the ethics of the family. The relations of husband and wife, parents and children, servants and masters are worked out in both in the spirit of the universal. Given the Christian faith, only one kind of family can result. This treatment is especially beautiful in Ephesians where Paul dares to compare the self-abnegating love of a true husband for his wife to the love of Christ for his church.

As seen in directions for a church: Titus 2.

The pastoral epistles of Paul give abundant evidence of his interest in the everyday morals of men. This passage of instruction to Titus in setting the church on its feet in the island of Crete details many particulars of the Christian mode of life, even to speaking and eating and drinking; but these details are all given dynamic by the one Christian way, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Good works come only of God's purifying.

THE USE OF HELPERS

But Paul's universal gospel did not depend alone on his own mission. His proclamation of the headship of

Christ and of his all-inclusive work, his clear-cut principles of rising above all unnatural barriers, his consistent living of such principles, his proclamation of a universal faith and an equally universal type of ethic—all these were magnificently done. But Paul did not depend on his own humanity alone any more than he depended on himself apart from Christ. Like his Master, he used many followers. Even more than the apostles of the book of Acts, he depended on the leadership of others. Not only did he have his Timothy and his Titus, his Luke and his Silas, but hosts of others, men and women alike, ministered to him and helped in the spread of his gospel.

Galaxies of helpers: Rom. 16:1-16, 21-23; Col. 4:7-17; II Tim. 4:9-21; Titus 3:12, 13; Philemon 23, 24.

It is worth anyone's while to read the lists of names that occur near the end of a number of Paul's letters. They encompass both a principle and a strategic method of his missionary labor. Well-known and unknown are spread alike upon the pages of such later letters as are listed here. The comments on some of these friends are as touching as they are revealing.

Church officers to be chosen with care: I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.

If we are correct in attributing the pastoral epistles to Paul, then his care for church organization should be noted as part of his mission method. We know from Acts that he appointed elders in the Galatian towns, and here we have him instructing the ministers whom he has established in Ephesus and Crete to make sure

that the church, so carefully started, shall not be allowed to go on the rocks by the choice of the wrong kind of men to responsible places in its work.

Responsibility for evangelism laid on certain centers:

Phil. 1:3-7; I Thess. 1:2-8; Rom. 10:15; 15:22-24.

One of the clearest evidences that Paul did not try to do it all is the fact that he limited his own work pretty much to the urban centers and made them responsible in turn for the evangelization of the districts around them. In his letter to the Philippian church he seems to have this in mind when he expresses his joy "for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." In his Thessalonian correspondence he is even more specific. He remembers their "work of faith, and labor of love," and he thanks God that they are "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." He lays upon his Roman readers the responsibility for sending out missionaries: "How can they preach except they be sent?" and he makes it clear that he himself expects to be "set on the way" by them.

BENEVOLENCE AND THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT

For that matter Paul got others to help the cause by inspiring them to give comparatively large sums of money. The financial side of the church came to the fore early in the first century. We saw that it was acute in Jerusalem as a question of caring for the needy, and it became tangled with the race problem when the Grecian widows felt they were being

neglected for the Jewish. Now it becomes still further involved in the race question. The Christians at Jerusalem are in dire straits, many of them no doubt prohibited by their Jewish compatriots from having access to financial means because of their faith. The Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia have means. Paul feels that he cannot let go the opportunity to care for the poor of Jerusalem. Yet it is a decidedly delicate matter. Many of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem had, no doubt, opposed the Gentiles coming into the church. Still, many Jewish Christians had joined in sending out the missionaries. Here was the chance for the Gentile Christians to send something back. Would they do it, and especially would they do it in the right spirit?

Arranging for the gift: I Cor. 16:1-9.

In his correspondence with the Corinthian church Paul lays bare his heart upon the subject. He tells these friends of Achaia that he has asked the same things of the Gentiles of Galatia that he is asking of them. He is eager that they lay aside their gifts regularly, week by week, before he comes, so that their giving may not seem to be of constraint on his part. He is eager that it be a generous gift, and that it be sent by them.

Principles of giving: II Cor. 8 and 9.

In his later correspondence with Corinth, Paul amplifies his feeling of urgency. The Jews have given the Gentiles a spiritual heritage. Surely the Gentiles can give the Jews material means. Interwoven with

practical admonitions in these two quite personal chapters, are some beautiful sayings about the nature of giving that are timeless in their application and that have long since come to be a permanent part of the missionary procedure. "They first gave their own selves unto the Lord," he writes of the generosity of his Macedonian friends. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he pleads, "that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." He is somewhat afraid of their delay; they began their collection for "the saints" a year ago. "Now therefore perform the doing of it." Again, as a gentle hint, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Again, in other words, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Paul feels that if they give, they will get (an old, old faith), that they will be "enriched in everything to all bountifulness."

Thus, it is evident that the great apostle was deeply concerned to have all his converts share with him in that expenditure of their lives which would most eloquently attest their Christianity. He organized them to labor, to testify, and to give. He made no mistake of letting his new wards die the spiritual death of intake with no outgo. Divine love itself had been tested by its outpoured willingness, and so it was that Paul could close his plea for benevolence with the exulting cry, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

CHAPTER 10

Struggle and Triumph: Hebrews, the General Epistles, and the Apocalypse

THE remaining books of our New Testament have one factor in common: they are all written to Christians of a rather widespread area. The Epistle to the Hebrews has no formal address, but the title appears in the early manuscripts of our Bible. The letter seems to justify the opinion of many scholars that the readers were Jewish Christians dispersed from Palestine, probably those who had come into contact with a large amount of Greek culture in the regions of Alexandria. The Epistle is written in polished style, with studied periods and real but restrained emotion. The world mind of its larger contacts is evident on every page.

THE MISSIONARY METHOD OF HEBREWS

Religion has sometimes been slow to see that it is not only what you do that is important, but how you do it, not only what you say, but how you say it. Christian movements might have had many happier experiences if their promoters had been more careful in their methods of approach to other peoples. False

impressions have often been created by authoritarian or condescending starts.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose name we do not know, was an adept at method. Not that he approached his task with undue caution or that he compromised his convictions in order to win men to his point of view. He is as frank as the Apostle Paul or as any other of the writers of the New Testament. Moreover, he deals in comparisons more than any other unless it be the author of the gospel of Matthew. But he makes his comparisons at the point of highest advantage for the cause he considers least as well as for the cause to which he seeks to win. This is so eminently fair that it should have encouraged a fresh study of the Epistle to the Hebrews before each new advance of the Christian church.

The people to whom the letter was written were apparently in danger of apostasy. They had given up a cultured, respectable religion for one without any standing. Judaism had had its beauteous temple, its elaborate ritual, its developed doctrines. It was allowable even in the Roman empire because it did not claim a unique appeal to those born outside its creed. It had honored names on the pages of its history: Abraham, Moses, David, and others. It boasted many proselytes. Christianity, on the other hand, was but a small beginning. Its founder had died a felon's death. Its followers often were "unlearned and ignorant men." It had few churches, its devotees meeting from house to house in many communities. It had a minimum of quiet ritual, and much hard living. While it had spread rapidly over

the Roman empire, its claim to be the only faith needed by man had soon gotten it into trouble. Now it was persecuted, and the day was evidently near when most of its followers would have to undergo suffering and take the spoiling of their goods. Some would be called to martyrs' deaths. Was it worth all this? Here was an easy chance of returning to an ancient faith now that the first flush of the appeal of the new had passed. Surely the old religion was good enough. Better go back!

Just such a situation is frequently met by the modern missionary in parts of the world where acknowledgment of Christ and the Christian way brings a stigma from the family or the community or the state. To save from apostasy is as real a work as to save from superstition or futile faiths in the first place. But how great the temptation to abandon the patience and the thorough understanding of the author of this epistle in favor of some shorter cut! Now it is true that this writer could be urgent. The many hortatory passages make it clear that the work he has left us is not a treatise but a letter. He is as confident as any of the apostles of the early chapters of the Acts that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye must be saved." In his most ardent passages, in the sixth and tenth chapters, he warns the near-apostates that if they give up the gospel of Christ after once tasting its good things, they may not "renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." He argues that if a Hebrew could be

put to death for despising Moses' law, surely anyone who despises the much grander law of Christ will suffer an unthinkable destruction. He urges his readers, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," recognizing that to give up this final gift of God is to find "no more sacrifice for sins."

But behind these glowing exhortations there is an understanding of the Hebrew mind that goes deep, a sympathy with Hebrew tradition that could not have been affected, and a ready recognition of all the finest in Hebrew religion. The author's unique method is to take Judaism not at its worst, but *at its best*, and then to show in each particular how Christianity is better. "Better than," not "instead of," is his great phrase. The Hebrew revealers of God were splendid agents, but Christ is better than all of them. The Hebrew way of life had much to commend it; the Christian way is superior at each point. By this sort of approach the author's comparisons become, not odious, but winsome.

Christ is superior to prophets and angels: 1:1-4; 2:1-4.

The opening sentence of the letter is magnificent in its sweep and nobly illustrative of the writer's method. He gladly admits that God "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," and he expands without contumely his thesis that he "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Similarly he treats the angels, so dear to the heart of Judaism. He recognizes them all as ministering spirits, but to none of them did God ever say, "Thou art my Son."

Christ is superior to great leaders such as Moses: 3:1-6.

Illustrative of the writer's use of the figures of great Jewish statesmen is his comparison of Christ with Moses. Moses was verily the building of God, but it is Christ who has built the house. Moses was most faithful, but his faithfulness was as a servant, while Christ's was as the Son over the whole house.

Christ is superior to priests and their offerings: 7:23-28; 9:13, 14; 10:11-14.

Likewise the priests of old were most attractive, but they had ever to give way by death to new priests, while Christ remains a priest forever. They had to offer sacrifice, not alone for the sins of others, but equally for their own iniquity. Christ was "separate from sinners" and hence could offer up himself once for all. The blood of bulls and goats is not despised by the writer; it "sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh." But, "how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purify your conscience?" The priests of old are recognized as remarkably faithful in keeping on with their work, but Christ has completed his work and has "sat down on the right hand of God; from hence expecting . . ."

The Christian way is a superior rest: 4:3-11.

The problem of finding rest to the soul in a weary world seems to have been as real in the first century as in the twentieth. The author of Hebrews recognizes how Joshua toiled to give the fathers rest in Canaan,

but they were never freed from foes. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God", and the Christian call is to "labor to enter into that rest."

The Christian covenant reaches the heart: 8:6-13.

In company with most New Testament writers this author stands by the covenant theology of the Old Testament. God has entered into an agreement with his people and he will not fail them. But he significantly turns to Jeremiah instead of the books of the law and quotes that prophet's far vision of the new kind of covenant that is written, not on tables of stones, but "into their minds and in their hearts."

The Christian access to God is freer than any other: 9:1-12.

In the ninth chapter the writer really outdoes himself to paint the glories of the old Hebrew system at their finest. He is not afraid to revel in the beauties of a pre-Christian temple. But, after all, the entire system got only one man once a year into the symbolic presence of God, while Jesus' death tore away the veil that has hung between God and man and enables him to take his whole host of followers into the actual presence of God continually. So it is that he is always "an high priest of good things to come."

The Christian faith is the most perfect of all: 11:39-12:2.

Often the well-known eleventh chapter of Hebrews is treated as a mere Westminster Abbey of the im-

mortals. But again we have an illustration of the author's missionary method. He describes in glowing terms the faith of many of the Old Testament saints, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Sarah, and the others of whom "time would fail me to tell," and he rises to heights of exultation about their heroic labors. But it is all for the purpose of coming to the point, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." He then proceeds to show that Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith" invites us to "run with patience the race" of a still higher trust.

JAMES' UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The General, or Catholic, Epistles were not written to any one church or region, but they still kept the Biblical viewpoint of a definite situation. In the case of James, the problem seems to be one of Jewish Christians, whom the author calls by the very Jewish name of "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." They are cooling off in their exhibition of their faith as they have become separated from the inspiration of larger Christian communities. The epistle is quite Jewish in its epigrammatic style and in much of its thought. The name of Jesus occurs rarely, but the ethical emphasis is quite like that of the Sermon on the Mount. Most of the wider viewpoint of James is to be noted in his conception of religion in large terms.

The gospel a leveler of rich and poor: 1:9-11; 2:1-7.

One of these large terms is James' interest in the underlings of society. Here he is very like his Master. Of chief concern seems to be the class distinctions that have already crept into the Christian church, and which James denounces in a spirit similar to that of the gospel of Luke. "The brother of low degree" may rejoice in the exaltation which the gospel has brought him, while "the rich man shall fade away in his ways." Almost whimsical is James' description of a worshipping assembly into which there comes a rich man with a gold ring to claim the chief seat, while the poor man sits "under the footstool." He reminds Christians that rich men are oppressors and he urges them not to have "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons."

Religion in action: 1:27; 2:14-20.

James is noted as the "doer of the word." His identification of "pure religion and undefiled" with the visiting of fatherless and widows has again the touch of concern for the neglected, and his further relation of it to personal purity is once more reminiscent of Hebrew thought and of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The active side of this type of religious life is stressed again in James' famous description of faith as tested by its works. These works are very "practical"; they are feeding and warming the needy. Keen indeed is the author's recognition that the proclamation of a monotheistic creed gets one no further than the demons,

who believe as much. "Faith without works is dead" is universal in its appeal.

Evangelistic zeal: 5:19, 20.

James does exhibit fervor in changing wrong-doers: "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." This has sometimes been abused by reading it as a covering of one's own sins by converting others, but obviously James means that the evangelist, by leading another away from sin, shall hide away that man's past evil deeds. This may not be the highest motive for evangelism, but it is one which a world suffering from the sins of many cannot afford to pass by.

FIRST PETER AND GOD'S FAMILY

The First Epistle of Peter reminds us of the rock apostle at many points, but at none more than in its love for group relationships. Peter was no recluse. He thinks of the Israel of his forefathers as the family of God, and he thinks of the Christian fellowship as God's new family.

This family includes many strangers: 1:1, 2; 2:9, 10.

The broad-mindedness of the Christian missionary is evident from the very first sentence of this great epistle. The election of God, so dear a term to the Hebrew with his sense of special privilege, has been extended to include "strangers" from many parts of the world. The "peculiar people" of this age are those

"which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God." Peter here employs the figures, and, to a large extent, the language of Ex. 19:4-6 to show that the Christian church is the successor to Judaism in its privilege and function.

Suffering as members of God's family is the best converting example: 2:11-21; 3:14-17.

The First Epistle of Peter plumbs deep the question of the purpose of suffering, not the suffering of ordinary pains and sorrows, but that of persecution for a cause. It makes use of its favorite family figure here. God has suffered in Christ, and therefore any who belong to God's redeemed family must bear the family burden of suffering. "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently," this is not only "acceptable to God," but it enables these very "strangers and pilgrims" to keep their "conversation honest among the Gentiles" and so lead them to the Christian faith. This is the best way to "shame" those that "falsely accuse" Christians. "Good conversation in Christ" is the finest missionary example.

SECOND PETER AND THE APPEAL TO ABSOLUTES

The Second Epistle attributed to Peter is quite different in style and thought from the First. Parts of it are apologetic in tone, parts are apocalyptic. All parts have the ring of the uncompromising absolute about them. The apology is a teaching of the basis of authority in absolute terms; the apocalyptic is an ap-

peal to the "hell-fire and brimstone" sort of warning, also in absolute terms.

The gospel rests on sure authority: 1:16-21.

As one reads these sentences he can almost see the comparative religionist searching out the literary sources of the Koran or the Brahman hymns or the Confucian sayings. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," declares the author. "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." "No scripture is of any private interpretation." Here is evidence that the early Christians knew how to distinguish between good and worthless materials in buttressing their faith, and evidence too for their high evaluation of firsthand testimony. Calmly and dispassionately they submitted such evidence to the world of superstitious faiths.

The imminent day of the Lord calls all men: 3:9-13.

The other absolute—a preaching of fear—is of course not so immediately appealing. It seems to have been part of the Christian evangel from the first. The prophetic doctrine of the day of the Lord was but the forerunner of the Christian conception of the imminence of judgment and the end. But let it be noted that the true Christian use of such an approach to men is clear in its ethical basis: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Moreover these warnings did not end with the note of

destruction: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Similar use of Apocalyptic warning is to be found in the Epistle of Jude.

THE UNIVERSAL IN THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

In one sense the Epistles of John are narrow. Their sphere of operation is limited. They envision a relatively small brotherhood group within which are to be found, in true usage, all the values of exclusiveness that the self-centered Gnostics think to find in a brotherhood of privileged birth. Yet in this very idea of limitation there is an appeal to the attractiveness of something other than "the world." For John has no false illusions about anyone being shut out from such a fellowship. All who truly will may enter, and those who do will find conceptions of life that satisfy just because they dare to be different. For John, the church was never of the world.

These conceptions of life center in three: John's idea of God, his idea of Christ, and his idea of the brotherhood.

God as light: I:1:5-7.

The thesis of the First Epistle of John is that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." To a world that believed that God was hidden, mysterious, dark, John proclaimed the God who is self-revealed to all men. This was indeed refreshing news to the first century which had all but exhausted philosophic speculation in its seeking for God. Perhaps it is all the re-

freshment which the twentieth needs, turning back as it is from a God whom men fear to find too near, to a God so wholly other than man as to be unintelligible to him. "God is light" to the simplest of souls.

God as love: I:4:7-14.

John is usually thought of as the apostle of love, but it should never be forgotten that this teaching of his is a polemic. The supercilious of his day did not believe in love. They felt the self-complacency that needs no love, even that of God. So John taught the love of God, but he taught it, not as a sentimental coddling, but as a bestowal of God's own person on the persons of men in self-sacrificing understanding and help: "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Christ as Advocate: I:2:1, 2.

The person of Christ is highly exalted in John's appeal to his readers. The same word is used of him that is used in John's Gospel of the Holy Spirit, for the term "Advocate" may also be rendered "Comforter." He comfortingly pledges himself to appeal to God on behalf of men. As such John calls him again "the propitiation for our sins," and he is prompt to add in one of his widest sweeps of appeal, "not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Christ as source of righteousness: I:2:29.

The First Epistle of John has a great deal to say about the absolute requirement of righteousness in

men. John dealt with a group who felt that so long as they were of the privileged class it did not matter what they did; unrighteous living could not affect their real selves. John brushed such an idea aside with his urgent demand for an ethic in life that was equally high for all. But he realized that such a demand would be futile without a dynamic sufficient to produce its realization, so he speaks in one breath of Christ as righteous and of everyone who does righteousness as being "born of him."

Christ as the life of the world: I:5:10-12, 19-21.

How can people in such a world as this preserve spiritual life? John's answer was in terms of another of his great universals: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Here was a clear pronouncement, not as an arbitrary doctrine, but as a realistic appreciation of what is needed to make life possible and keep it strong. The First Epistle closes with John's expression of what both God and Christ mean to those who are delivered from worshipping the idols of this world. It is an expression that reminds us of Christ's prayer in the Johannine gospel.

The brotherhood as distinctive: I:2:15-17; 5:4, 5.

The evangelistic appeal of that which is exclusive is ethical when the exclusiveness is not artificial but real and of adequate purpose. So John can call men not to love "the world" as a sphere of that which "passeth away" and which therefore cannot satisfy.

He can challenge men to live in that brotherhood of "our faith" which "overcometh the world."

The brotherhood as testing the meaning of love: I:3:

14-17; 4:20, 21.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" is the saying which establishes the exclusive Christian brotherhood as having an adequate purpose for its separateness. Love is to be tested in small compass and under favorable circumstances. If it cannot win there, it will not have a chance beyond this sphere. As with James' conception of faith, John's treatment of love is the meeting of immediate need, opening the heart of the brother who "hath this world's good" to supply those who have not. For John no true church can have in it any suffering that can be remedied. Since the love of God is self-giving, the Christian's love is self-giving too. Indeed, to say that one loves God and not to love one's brother is simply to involve one's character in a lie, "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

The brotherhood as involving the truth of life: II:1, 2;

III:4-8.

Like the genuine philosopher he was, John deals much with what he calls "truth." But by truth John does not mean some abstract formula. He speaks of "doing the truth." The truth with John means the one real way of life. This life is always lived in the brotherhood. His best illustrations of this are the little

leaves which we know as his Second and Third Epistles. In the one, he speaks of the children of "the elect lady" as those "whom I love in the truth." In the other, he writes of the way of the "beloved Gaius" as being the truth because he takes in strangers who come preaching the word and does not turn them away as others are doing. To receive such strangers and to help finance them as they go on their journey is to "be fellow helpers to the truth." Behold hospitality as a missionary method in the New Testament!

THE REVELATION AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD

The book of Revelation is often considered a worked-over Jewish Apocalypse, full of the notes of judgment, and vindictive in some of its spirit. It is often said to be without any of the universal notes of other parts of the New Testament except that of a world-wide kingdom with ideals of dominance similar to those of conquering dictators. But a closer examination shows this Apocalypse to be far more Christian than Jewish, even though some of its notes of emphasis are those we do not customarily strike.

The keeping power of Christ: Chs. 1-3, esp. 1:10-20.

Like almost all Apocalypses the book of Revelation was written to comfort and assure the persecuted. The first source of such comfort is the keeping power of Christ. Beautiful beyond compare and resourceful in its use of Old Testament imagery is the first chapter with its vision of the Son of Man in the midst of his "candle-stick" church. He holds the stars of its des-

tinies in his hand, he upholds the angels of its spirit with his strength. Replete with interest and effectiveness are the second and third chapters where all of the descriptive phrases of the keeping Christ that are used in the first chapter are applied in turn to the different churches of Asia Minor with their varying needs. In similar vein, the writer later represents the witnesses of Christ as kept in his power, so that no one may hurt them until their work is done (11:3-12). He also pictures the pure and true as standing secure with him (14:1-5). The dead in the Lord peacefully "rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (14:13). The very martyrs are so safe with him that they live and reign with him for the millennium of his glory (20:1-6). These doctrines of assurance have a world appeal in much the same way as the doctrine of the exclusive brotherhood of the Johannine Epistles.

The redeeming power of Christ: Ch. 5, esp. v. 9; 7:9, 10.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation are notable for their beatific view of worship in heaven. Especially is the fifth to be prized as the wondrously inspired vision of Christ the redeemer. The universal missionary appeal is vivid in color here, as the writer sings of the Christ, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power" are ascribed to the Redeemer by "every creature which is in

heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea."

Christ's universal judgment: 14:14-16; 19:1-3, 11-16; 20:11, 12.

The very emphasis on judgment which is so strong in the book of Revelation offers opportunity for stressing the world-wide nature of Christ's work. As the Son of Man on the cloud with his sickle in hand, he is bidden to reap, "for the harvest of the earth is ripe." His judgments on the great harlot city that ruled the whole earth are pronounced "true and righteous." As the rider on the white horse with eyes "as a flame of fire," he sends the two-edged sword of judgment out of his mouth and treads the winepress of the fierceness of God's wrath because he has "on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." As the one on the "great white throne . . . from whose face the earth and heaven fled away," he judges all the dead, "small and great."

God's universal sway: 14:6, 7; 15:1-4; 11:15.

It is a joy to note that John sees an angel flying "in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The gospel of the book of Revelation is universal. We must never forget that the philosophy of judgment in this book is not that of an end in itself, but of a means to an end. The evil of the world is judged and condemned in order that the good may be completely saved; for

to John, salvation is impossible in any full sense so long as evil is in existence. Hence the lake of fire and brimstone into which the devil is cast. But the salvation is world-wide, the drawing of men who are redeemed from the devil's sway is from every corner of the earth, so that it is God who has the real world kingdom. And since Christ is, for John, ever the ruler of God's kingdom, it is natural that he should bring in the hymn of the seventh angel of the trumpets, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."

The hope of new heavens and a new earth: 21:1-22:5.

In keeping with the spirit and thought of so much of the Bible John's Apocalypse does not leave the kingdom of heaven as an abstract ideal. It is made concrete in the renewal of the very face of the heavens. It is made real for men in the thought of a different kind of earth. The picture of the eternal city "descending out of heaven from God," a perfect cube of celestial beauty, is part of the broader vision of the writer, for "the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it," and the leaves of the tree of life that is "in the midst of the street of it" are to be used for "the healing of the nations."

The last invitation: 22:17.

But the universalism of the book of Revelation is seen in perhaps its tenderest light in the very last of the invitations which the book issues in God's name:

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Water—life—whosoever. Universal terms indeed! Thus does our New Testament end with the vision of God’s outstretched hand.

EPILOGUE

The Missionary Message of the Bible as a Whole

THIS book has sought to outline and to comment upon the chief missionary teachings and world viewpoints of each part of the Bible. It is itself a summary. Any attempt to rearrange the passages studied in systematic order would tend to an artificial, and therefore an unbiblical, result. But it should be worth while in these concluding pages to note a few basic ideas which tie together the great variety of approaches to truth which the Bible contains.

REAL UNITIES IN THE BIBLE

Many have been the attempts, ancient and modern, to "purge" the Bible of portions that do not seem to harmonize with the ideas of some person or some age as to the true nature of the Christian faith. All such attempts have failed, not because they have been poorly worked out, for some of them have been intelligently planned, but because there really are fundamental unities about the Hebrew-Christian tradition that make it legitimate to bind together the Old and New Testaments. These unities are to be found mostly

by treating the writings of our New Testament as the successors to the prophetic type of literature in the Old Testament, using the term "prophetic" in its broadest sense. It may often be true that there are exceptions in the Bible to the unities of thought thus viewed, but the main trends are clearly discernible.

There is oneness in the picture of God. True it is that there are lower periods among the religious people who gave us our Old Testament when capricious acts were supposed to have been performed by God. The times of the judges are an example, and they find occasional counterpart in other days. Apparently many Israelites considered other gods beside their own to have reality. But by and large the prophets of the Hebrew faith were one with the later apostles of Jesus in insisting on the ethical character of their God and his complete and satisfying nature. It is highly significant that the Jews selected the "Shema" as their all-important passage: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and that Jesus quoted it and called it the first and great commandment. Just because Hebrews and Christians could thus think of God as essentially one and the same for all the earth, the biblical picture of God is inevitably missionary. In no other religious literature have qualities of righteousness and love been blended in so rich a harmony. It was the genius of an Isaiah and a Hosea, of a John and a Paul to see that for God to be right and for God to be gracious were not contradictory ideas that had to be

balanced against each other lest one or the other run away with religion. They were not even two portraits of the same deity, but were qualities of character that dwelt together in one sublime Person. The God of our Bible is a unity and therefore the only God.

There is also oneness in the picture of humanity. True enough, there were occasions on which the Hebrews took the idea of their being "a peculiar people" out of its original missionary setting in the blessing of Abraham and became narrow and selfish, just as Christians often do today. They sought the judgments of God on other peoples and the salvation of themselves alone. But all through the Old Testament as well as through the New, the voices of the prophets kept the original declaration ringing in the ears of the people. God had made man in his own "image," and therefore he had made him "of one blood." We have seen how a great soul like Isaiah could see this essential unity even in the conflicting world powers of his day, and how a great spirit like Paul could batter down all racial and cultural and social barriers though they seemed to be the reality of his situation. On this idea of the essential oneness of man Jesus based his belief in the worth of man. The missionary gospel of redemption is possible just because of the faith which the Bible clearly champions that however deep down the image of God in any given man may be covered, it still is there and can be restored to life and health. Although Paul preaches the unity of the race in sin, he preaches the even stronger unity in Christ in whom the image of God is perfect.

This very teaching of sin is another of the Bible's unities. Some there were who held the breaking of ritual observance to be sin, making but little distinction between that which was unpleasant and that which was immoral. But the main current in both Testaments is a thinking of sin in ethical terms and a rooting of real sin, not in acts, but in the thoughts and intents of the heart. Thus Jesus is in harmony with the prophets when he counts lovelessness to be the greatest of all sins and ugliness of disposition to be worse than crime. There is no attempt in our Bible to excuse humanity for its faults. Realism is the order of the day in looking at what human nature is. But whereas so many people think they are seeing realistically when they gaze upon the outward, visible effects of sin, the leading spirits of the Old and New Testaments know they must plumb the depths to be realists at all.

And if sin is one, salvation is one. Fundamentally that is the reason that biblical literature cannot tolerate the idea of more than one savior. If sin lies in the attitude of the heart, hope for relief from sin can come only when there is contained in one heart perfect freedom from sin and at the same time divine power to pass on that freedom to all in that heart's sway. "There is none other name" may sound narrow, but it is sufficient. No nationalism, no ethnic cult, no strange spirit is needed. The Greek and Roman world of Jesus' day shopped around among the many saviors of the mystery cults for help in this or that walk of life. Jesus is "filled with all the fullness of God." It is an essential of faith that is harmonious with itself

that "God hath given him the name which is above every name," the name of Savior. "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence" is the grateful praise of the heart touched with the utter satisfactoriness of God's saving work.

For this reason, too, the idea of the kingdom in the New Testament becomes but the outworking of the true prophetic kingdom of the Old. Here again, many of the Jews had been glad to interpret the kingdom in selfish terms and materialistic pleasures. Jesus' own disciples did the same. But the prophetic souls of both Testaments came to see the spiritual nature of the reign of God. The Messiah of the Old and the Christ of the New are given a kingdom which is world-wide simply because one real kingdom of the spirit supplanting all the futile efforts of men to build kingdoms after their own fancies is the only way to life and peace.

Now it is worth noting that all these unities of our Bible are essentially missionary. If there were many gods or many wavering qualities in God there could be no sure sound to a spokesman's appeal. But one God of one blended character commands universal worship. If the five races of men were essentially different, there could be no ultimate missionary evangel among them. But because there is only one final race, missions are real. If sins were of fundamentally opposite kinds the world around, or if other ills beside sin beset the spirits of men, religions would need to be different to meet the varying situations. But because the one basic evil, essentially the same in its heart quality, plagues

humanity everywhere it is found, religion can be one and the missionary appeal to one faith can be meaningful. If the mystery cults had been able to cope with life by their scores of saviors, religion could well have been multiple. But because one Savior comprehends all needs his evangel can be world-wide. If many kingdoms could exist side by side in the new world order to which we move, there might be no ultimate ground for missions. But because the kingdom is in the hearts of men it is eternally one and universal. The unities of the Bible are essentially missionary.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLICAL MISSIONARY METHOD

But all of this does not mean that it is the prerogative of any one people or one church to announce to the world that it possesses this unity of faith and life while others do not and therefore it will "give" the gospel to the others. Such conceptions of missions lead to all kinds of bigotry and oppression. The prophets and Jesus are one in their denunciation of the making of converts for converts' sake. Such a proselytism is an unholy pastime, and invariably results in making the convert "twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." The leader of men to a new way of life must ever take care that he is really guiding into truer righteousness. Otherwise he has only a missionary complex that will make him feel pious while he is toying with men's receptiveness.

The missionary method of the Bible is ever one of persuasive working *with* men, not *for* them. Nothing good is superimposed; it is mediated through the

choices of those for whom it is meant. All that dominates is of this world. Missions can afford to yield much ground in order to cut itself forever loose from the sword and the economic advantage and the planting of some earthly flag. The missionary must be sure he is servant of all, not the tool of the slave-driver. Like his Lord, it is imperative that he come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister,"—yes, and "to give his life." The meekness of Zephaniah and of Jesus must relieve any suspicion of authoritarianism. Only so can missions be truly biblical.

We may even go so far as to say that the biblical method of missions consists in always seeking to know the state of all men at their best, rather than at their worst, and working out from there to let that best suggest the need of the "better yet" that lies beyond. The Epistle to the Hebrews is ever the missionary's guide book here. Its method of winning men from one faith to a higher faith is the glad recognition that all men have faith, the fearless acceptance of their faith for all it is worth, and the invitation to seek together the higher faith which all partial faiths suggest. Every missionary, like every teacher, follows the way of God only when he resists the temptation to dictate or to denounce unsparingly, and when he thinks of himself as a seeker with those whom he serves. For none of us yet sees clearly. The fact that we have the finality in Jesus Christ does not mean that any of us knows in any final sense. "We understand in part." The life of God's spirit is a life of guidance "into all truth." We still await great contributions to Christian

life and thought from Indian and Chinese, from African and South American, even as early Jewish Christianity was modified by the Gentile world in which its mission spread.

THE INEVITABLENESS OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT

It is the most solemn paradox of life that if we will not live like this, we die. Self-satisfaction and narrow-mindedness defeat themselves. Paradoxically enough, the ancient Jews failed to become the people of God simply because they sought too hard to make themselves God's only people. Their failure was a missionary failure. It is interesting to note how the best of them saw this all along the way. It is even more interesting to note how inescapable the wider contacts were. The records of the historical books of the Old Testament are broken into again and again, as we have seen, by some wholesome contact between the would-be separate people and their neighbors. They just could not keep apart from others' needs any more than they could from others' sins. Their poets sang of universal themes and of all nations praising God. Their philosophers interested themselves in the struggles of timeless characters like Job and the "preacher" of Ecclesiastes. Their prophets carried them continuously in their thinking beyond the confines of their own nation. Even when their narrowest zealots would purify their race and wall in those who had returned from exile, their saner souls protested with such broad-minded tracts as the books of Ruth and Jonah.

《Similarly, in the New Testament, the early Chris-

tians found that only as they gave themselves away could they grow. Some of the leaders dwelt so long in Jerusalem that they had to have their eyes opened by the missionary work of men like Peter and Barnabas and Paul before they realized that they were trying to keep the Christian faith ingrown. Only when they were "scattered abroad" did they go "everywhere preaching the word." The Antioch church became the leader of the first century in no respect more than in this, that it was willing, at the time of its own need, to "separate" Barnabas and Paul for the wider work to which God had called them. To the church of today, fearfully entrenching itself in its present possessions, the words of Jesus come again with solemn judgment, yet with releasing peace: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

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